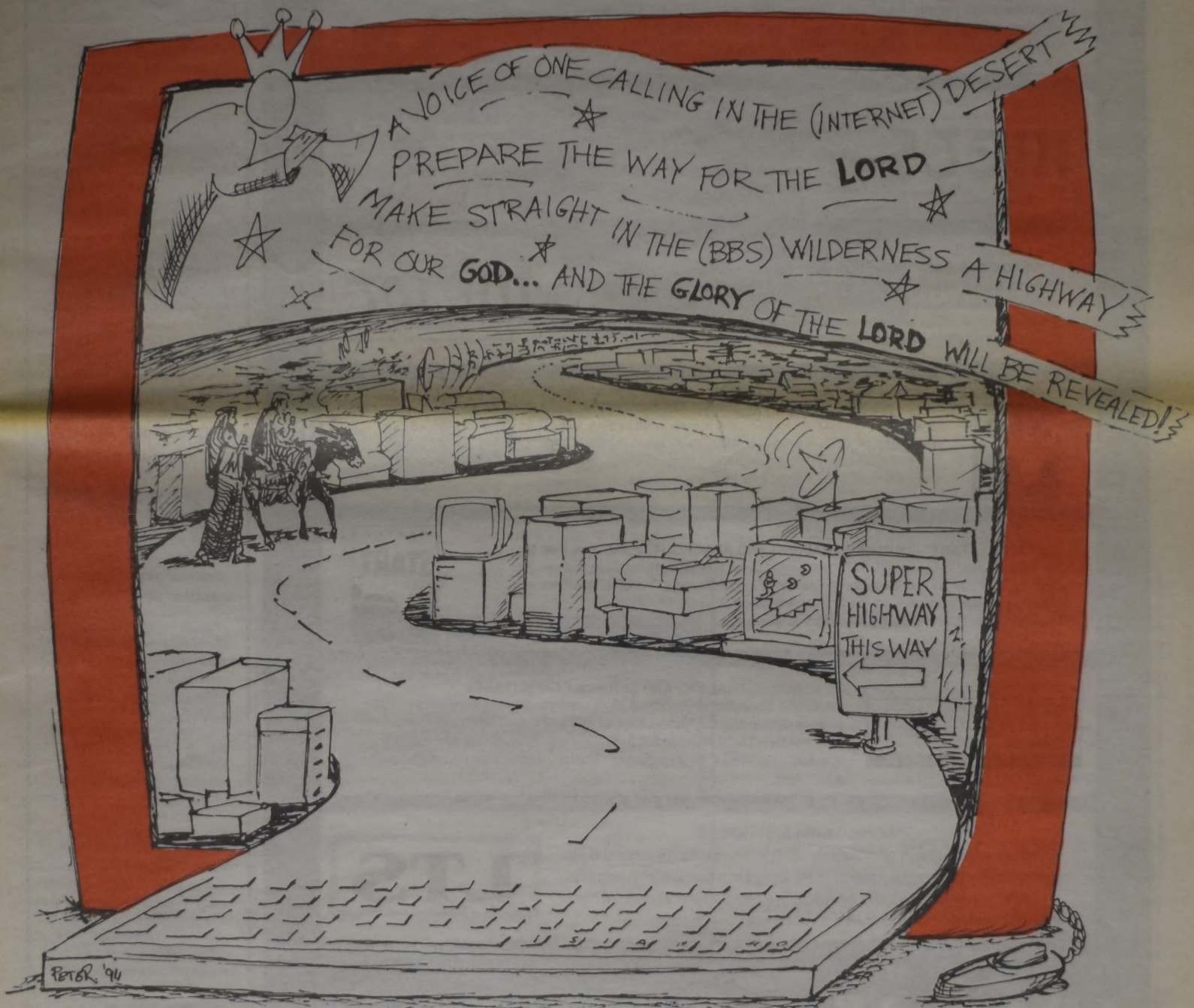


Christian Courier

A REFORMED WEEKLY, formerly known as Calvinist Contact

December 2, 1994/50th year of publication/No. 2422



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Fifty copies of this issue of Christian Courier are being sent to CRC missionaries around the world, courtesy of Christian Reformed World Missions. Fifty copies will also reach inmates at Collins Bay Institution, Kingston, Ontario.

News

Rwanda — a land of amazing contrasts

Ray Elgersma

The Rwanda I visited in November is a land of both horror and hope. I have never seen horror to match the churchyard where 6,200 Christians were slaughtered. But I have never seen a Christian so dedicated and courageous as the young man the new government has put in charge of governing this shattered community.

Kablea Asiel has been in prison, almost lost his leg when soldiers shot him in 1990, and now has lost his parents and his brother. His father was a pastor. The president of the man's church council turned on the congregation and led the slaughter of 4,500 parishioners, including Asiel's family.

Asiel, who was studying for his master's of business administration at UCLA, said he would dearly love to be with his wife and four children in California. And he lives in daily fear because racial tensions continue to run high. "But I feel God has placed me in this place, that it's my duty to serve him here," Asiel told me.

Asiel has to start from scratch. He has an office, but no desk, no chair, no typewriter, nothing. He has no car to get around. He has no salary, no budget — only \$25 U.S. in his pocket. He faces tremendous challenges: handling cases of refugees returning to find their homes, their fields and their businesses taken over by others.

There are teachers, but they're not teaching because there is no pay. The roads are in constant need of repair, but there's no money to hire road crews. The Pentecostal Church has a plan to help this Christian governor get the community back on its feet. Why not use food to pay for teachers and others workers in essential services?

Food as salary

That's where the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee has come into the picture. Lou Haveman and Patsy Orkar, CRWRC workers in this area, have lined up 2,000 tonnes of food — about 1,700 tonnes of it from the United Nation's World Food Program and 300 tonnes from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. Instead of simply giving the food away, now it will do double duty: feed needy people and help rebuild a shattered community.

Haveman and Orkar have also distributed 23,000 hoes and 60 tonnes of seed to families who need help to start their

the 23 countries I have visited. It's the Switzerland of Africa, it's home to hills and lakes, lush forests, waterfalls, and the en-

tians to take a strong stand against the international arms trade. There is much more that we could and should be doing

reconciliation services. The International Bible Society has taken the lead to organize nine agencies in Burundi to reach and teach 2,000,000 Tutsis and Hutus within the next year so that the country can avoid what has happened between the same two peoples in next-door Rwanda. CRWRC is providing 800 metric tonnes of food to support this work.

Peacemaking is a gift from God, and I think we could and should be calling gifted people forth from our congregations to act as peacemakers. Conflicts are a threat in 20 of the countries where the CRWRC is working today, so there are lots of opportunities to assist with peacekeeping and peacemaking all around our world.

I will never forget the horror of what we saw: blood and skin on the fieldstone wall of that beautiful church in Kibuye, skulls and bones on the ground and the scent of death still lingering in the air. But I have been tremendously moved by the testimony of the people who have suffered so much. I feel it as a call to ministry, to live and work in solidarity with these Christian sisters and brothers. And not just during this crisis, but also in the longer-term effort to rebuild their communities and to bring peace and reconciliation.



Fred Bennink, president of CRWRC attracted a crowd of Tutsi children at a refugee camp in Burundi, south of Rwanda.

lives anew and have provided food supplement to 32,000 families. "One of my big challenges is to handle our food aid in ways that help needy people, yet don't create dependency," Haveman says. It's a challenge that's familiar to the people who run our food banks and soup kitchens here in Canada.

Rwanda is a beautiful country, the most beautiful of

dangered mountain gorilla. Ten per cent of the country is national parks. It was densely populated with about 7.5 million people and most were Christians — Roman Catholics and members of Evangelical churches.

I saw all kinds of guns and arms in Rwanda. I now understand in an entirely new way why it's important for Chris-

tians in this regard in Canada.

Practical reconciliation

I also saw a tremendous need for peace and reconciliation, and an opportunity for Christians to serve in this regard. Other Christians are already showing us the way. Menonites not only stand for peace, but also offer practical

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The computer as voice calling in the desert

If anyone asked you to connect computers and Christmas, you might be thinking, "Aha, Christmas present" — an expensive Christmas present at that. But would you see the technology you might be buying as a means of revealing the glory of the Lord which all humankind will see together?

Pardon? Run that by me one more time.

Would you connect the information superhighway with Isaiah 40, the way graphic artist Peter Reitsma has done for us on the front cover?

Whenever we purchase new technology, we're not just buying "things" that are neutral in value. We always buy influence and direction possibilities. Every human invention increases the human potential for good and for evil. That's because everything we invent is an extension of ourselves.

The car takes over from our feet and increases our mobility. The backhoe takes over from our arms and hands and is able to move more dirt in an hour than we could in a week. The telephone is an extension of our mouths and ears as it improves our ability to hear and speak at a distance. And the computer is an extension of our minds.

In other words, with every invention and with every acquisition of new technology we add to our bodies.

Level the computer highway

In Romans 12:1 Paul urges his brothers and sisters to offer their bodies as "living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God." Should the extensions of our bodies not be offered also? All these things and technologies that surround us and that we make our own — their purposes and their uses — should we not claim them as part of our reasonable service, our spiritual worship?

"Nothing that we make, buy or use is exempted from Isaiah's GST."

There's a voice crying in the wilderness of multimedia computers and the Internet to level the rough ground of trivialization, greed, self-determinism and hedonism so that the Lord of life may travel freely into the human scene.

This voice also says to us, "Cry out."

It may be that we are tempted to respond the way the prophet Isaiah did: "What shall I cry? All people are like grass." This computer technology that surrounds us is so powerful that we are helpless. Don't come to me with your pious stuff about offering the technology I use as part of my reasonable service.

That's true, of course. We are like grass and our glory is like the flowers of the field. One breath of the Lord, and we are gone. But there is something that is not like grass and that's available to us: the Word of our God. It stands forever.

Don't be afraid

Did you hear that? The "Word" of our God. Put that in your "word" processors. If communication is what the information superhighway is all about, think of the possibilities when the Word that stands forever is keyed in, is sent by modum or the Internet via bulletin boards and e-mail!

You, who work or play with computers, get

yourself up on a high mountain with at least 250 megabytes on your hard drive and eight on your RAM. Lift up your monitors, lift them up, do not be afraid; say to the businesses and universities of the world: "Here is your God! See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompence accompanies him." And then add in a Souvenir Demi Italic postscript:

"He tends his flock like a shepherd. He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young."

Don't be intimidated by the technology. There's another human being on the other end of the line. Maybe your message has to be less confessional to avoid a flame-out. In all likelihood it has to be almost subliminal at times so that there's only a faint wisp of Good News in the air. As long as that faint wisp is not a reflection of a low fire burning in your heart, you're OK.

The point is that nothing that we make, buy or use is exempted from Isaiah's GST: God Speaks Tenderly. So don't complain, "My modern technological way is hidden from the Lord." It isn't.

"Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired. He [like the computer] increases the power of the weak."

Are you dreaming of a megabyte Christmas?

BW

Playful definitions

Computer: an electronic machine that can store large amounts of coded data and can be set, or programmed, to perform mathematical and logical operations at high speed, without the intervention of a human operator during the operation.

Christmas: A feast that celebrates an event that can store large amounts of uncoded grace and that sets in motion a rescue operation at high speed, without the intervention of a human operator during the rescue operation.

Question: What do Christmas and computers have in common?

Answer: Both are intended to bring glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.

BW

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- expresses opinions that are infused by Scripture and Spirit and rooted in a Reformed perspective,
- provides opportunities for contact and discussion for the Christian community.

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Letters

What's needed is effective compassion

Peter Sinnema (letters, CC, Nov. 11) is quite right in suggesting that Christians in Canada need to begin a serious discussion about public welfare. Labelling views he doesn't agree with as "fear mongering" and "paranoid" as well as "vague and cavalier," however, does not seem a good place to begin an honest and open conversation.

Mr. Sinnema's letter as well as CC's headline article "Alberta Christians against Premier Klein" both call attention to at least one of the critical issues in this discussion: do government programs of wealth redistribution really work? Has the spending of literally billions in the last 25 years in North America really helped the poor?

Many compassionate and caring people, precisely because they care about the poor, have come to the conclusion that in fact government welfare has been noticeably counter-productive in addition to piling up unconscionable debts. The issue is thus not compassion identified with government welfare versus

opposition to welfare identified with coldhearted, selfish indifference to the poor but effective practice of compassion.

Mr. Sinnema's call for imagination in more redistribution is precisely what needs to be examined more closely. Perhaps our imagination is challenged to find alternatives to that very effort.

I read the Nov. 11 issue of *Christian Courier* the morning after attending a passionate speech by a delightful nun, Sister Connie Driscoll, who started a new order to minister to homeless women and children on the south side of Chicago. Her Ministry has been a phenomenal success and she contends that a key reason for this is that she absolutely refuses to accept even a penny of government money.

Here's a suggestion for CC: help get this needed conversation going by interviewing Sister Connie or featuring her work.

John Bolt

Calvin Theological Seminary
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Schilder was temporarily in hiding

The headline of the letter to the editor read "Schilder was in hiding during war" (CC, Oct. 28). In August 1940 Schilder was arrested. Several months later he was released, but not allowed to publish. In July 1942 the Germans attempted to interrogate him and, as Jan de Koning pointed out, he decided to go into hiding. He did not stay in hiding, however, for in August 1944 he read his "Act of Liberation" in public. Should

De Koning not have mentioned that in order to prevent a possible misleading impression?

Those interested in the possible effects of the war on "1944" may want to read J. Ridderbos, "Vrijmaking in bezet gebied," *Transparent* (August 1994, pp.23-26), a Dutch journal published by Reformed Christian historians.

Bert den Boggende
Fairview, Alta.

Positive reasons made them join

In regards to the article on the Christian Labour Association of Canada representing the John Knox Christian School staff in Brampton (CC Oct. 28), one item needs to be clarified.

Problems in our JKCS school community caused us to look at joining the CLAC. We joined the CLAC for other positive reasons.

The Brampton JKCS community has had and will continue to have these reasons available to them by asking the staff.

Edward J. Petrusma
JKCS teacher
Brampton, Ont.



Just taxation instead of government hand-outs maybe the answer

In reaction to your front-page story on cuts to government spending in Alberta (CC, Nov. 11), I agree that the role of government is not to ensure economic prosperity but to see to it that there is a just and fair ordering of society. A government which spends far beyond what it collects ensures that a good portion of its citizens will end up in the "poorhouse." Setting this right is a very complex task in which no decisions are pleasant. The church (because I noted that the CRC deacons from northern Alberta were involved) should lobby the government to take its rightful place in helping the poor, disabled and unfortunate among us. This could be achieved, for example, by not taxing money that deacons give to the needy, or not deducting it from welfare

payments.

In my view you cannot accuse the government of "downloading" their responsibilities when they should not have had the responsibility in the first place. If we would have just taxation, meaning taxation at a level with no debt payments, then we as individual Canadians could look after the poor, disabled and unfortunate among us. Any government that steers us in that direction will go a long way to (re-)establishing a just and fair society.

I suggest we also take some care when referring to people who live "in slum housing" in Edmonton (I doubt Edmonton has any by Calcutta standards). This raises another interesting point in terms of what is considered "making sure people can live (decent) lives." From

my vantage point, the bar of decent living is always being raised and people demand higher and higher levels. Maybe CPJ and NADC could help us out and define this in an economic sense without being judgmental.

I found it interesting that CPJ can now be counted among the special interest groups who line up to receive government money only to turn around and criticize the hand that feeds them. I cannot but see a conflict here. I suggest that CPJ (which, I believe, consists primarily of Christians) should maintain total independence from government. Their supporters already get a nice tax break by contributing to CPJ, which is a charitable organization.

J.A. Boessenkool
Surrey, B.C.

*"For my eyes have
seen your salvation,
which
you have prepared in
the sight of all
people."*

(Luke 2:30,31)

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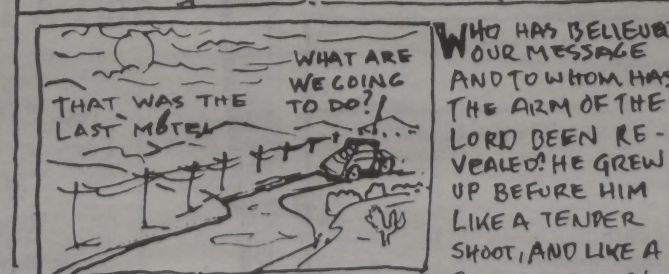
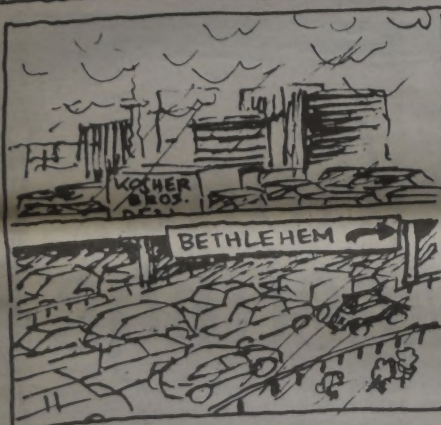
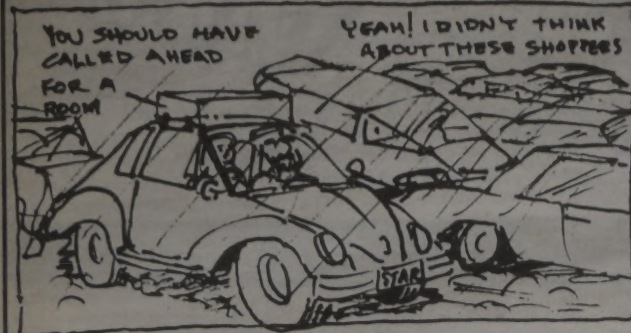
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Is there a vacancy in your inn-volvements?

SOMEWHERE IN OUR HECTIC PACE DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON, WE TEND TO LOSE

SIGHT OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST. WOULD WE RECOGNIZE JOSEPH & MARY IN OUR TIME?



Front page illustration

This year's Christmas cover was conceived and executed by Peter Reitsma of Milton, Ont. Reitsma is a graphic artist at large who works from out of his office in Mississauga, Ont. Reitsma also drew the cartoon featured on this page.

The front-page illustration and the cartoon both show how Reitsma wants to integrate the meaning of Christmas, of the Kingdom of God, in fact, into every-day life at the end of the 20th century. Both affirm and question the connection between Christ and culture today — "Who has believed our report?" The voice of Internet calls out for straight paths.

For a fuller elaboration of this theme, see the editorial on p.4.

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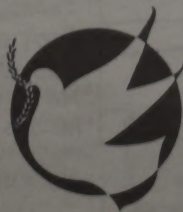
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The ability to wait

An Advent reflection

Maria Stam

An inscription on the wooden towel holder in my kitchen reads: "The hurrier I go the behinder I get!" I have often experienced the truth of these words when I tried to accomplish a task within a limited time but because of my haste make mistakes which cause delays.

In our fast-paced world we don't appreciate postponements. Direct results and instant satisfaction have become a hallmark of our technological age. By pushing buttons and keys our wishes are answered within seconds, whether we are looking for information or entertainment.

We easily become impatient when we are being forced to wait. In urban traffic drivers nervously honk their horns when cars in front of them don't start immediately after a traffic light turns green. Minutes later they speed ahead and pass the slower drivers who usually catch up with them at the next stop sign. Thinking that you can gain time by speeding is an illusion. Statistics show that most accidents happen because of speeding.

Time has become a costly commodity in today's world. Despite shorter work-weeks and increased leisure time, and faster transportation and communication systems, there seem never enough hours in the days. We constantly try to make time speed up by mixing the seasons. Christmas is brought to our doorsteps with catalogues and advertisements at the beginning of October. Christmas decorations have hardly been taken down when our attention is drawn toward Valentine's Day. The next "feast" is heralded with ads of Easter bunnies and chocolate eggs, soon to be followed by gift suggestions for Mother's Day. Dictated by the market economy, we are placing what used to be religious feasts ahead of their actual dates instead of waiting patiently for their time to come.

Premature Christmas

Advent is pre-eminently a joyful waiting time in anticipation of Christ's birthday. But the mystery and wonder of these weeks are drowned by the commercial clutter and the

blatant playing of "holiday" music in stores and malls long before Christmas Day. Advent loses its significance with advanced Christmas parties, organized by companies and clubs.

Do you really need these parties? Dinners and festive gatherings as opportunities to bring together members or employees do not depend on Christmas: they can take place any time during the year. We should make an effort to say no to these parties and suggest other times for celebrations.

The premature singing of "Silent Night" and other Christmas carols diminishes the anticipated joy which is so prevalent in our young children whose imagination is not yet influenced by commercialism. Each morning during Advent four-year-old Lisa opens one of the little windows of her Advent calendar. Before she opens it, she guesses what kind of picture she is going to find behind the shutters. She becomes excited when her expectation turns out to be right. Her waiting is filled with joyful anticipation, until December 25th when she is allowed to open the door which hides the nativity scene with the baby Jesus. From time to time she becomes impatient and wants to open several windows at once to shorten the waiting, but her mother warns, "Don't rush — we are not ready for Christmas."

Productive waiting

Daily life is filled with waiting for things to happen. Often, when we are looking forward to changes in our situations, we wish to speed up the waiting period. Expressions like, "I can hardly wait... till I have graduated, ...till I can start my business, ...till I get married, ...till I retire," are indications of our impatience. Pregnant women have no other choice than to wait patiently until the end of the gestation. A baby will come when it is ready and the mother-to-be needs that time to prepare herself for the new life.

While Mary waited for her son to be born she visited Elizabeth to share the happy tiding with her cousin. Sharing time during Advent with lonely

people, who are waiting for a knock at their doors and some caring words and friendly smiles, can brighten these cold winter days when loneliness is felt more intensely.

Compassion and understanding for the needs of others make Advent so much more meaningful. Rushing forward and trying to shorten this precious waiting time robs us of the anticipated joy which, according to an old German proverb, is the greatest joy. Waiting can be painful when we experience hardships and tragedies in our lives and there are no solutions to our problems in sight, or when the process of healing is too slow. Advent as a time of hopeful expectancy encourages a new beginning. We have to trust life, because Christ brought life into the world, and because we do not live our lives alone since God dwells among us.

During these four Advent weeks recall the long waiting of the Israelites for the Messiah. How much easier is it for us to wait only a short while for the remembrance and confirmation of Christ's birth.

As Mary waited faithfully for the fulfilment of the angel's word, so let us wait in prayerful resignation until the time for celebration of this great miracle has arrived.

Maria Stam is a published author of poetry, a historical novel and many articles. She lives in London, Ont.



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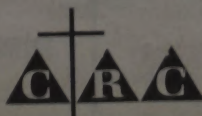
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The return of the Ice Age

Herman de Jong

"Look Daddy, it's coming up to the window sill now."

With a wide scoop Carl De Jager lifted his six-year old daughter Sarah into his embrace. Her tiny arms circled his neck and she kissed him on the nose, the only place not covered by prickly beard and mustache.

Mary De Jager left a golden pancake to brown on the other side and joined them at the window. Together they watched the yellow school bus stop at their neighbor's farm down the road. Then it moved slowly, in the wake of a huge snowplow. As more snow fell every winter, snowplows had increased in size. Now they were even larger than the orange scoopers which roared back and forth at the large dump on the edge of the township where garbage from six neighboring cities filled valley after valley.

The year was 2050. No more garbage trucks. Huge helicopters dumped their filth like cows dropped turds. But the old-fashioned school bus, as so many other things used half a century ago, had survived. Great technological strides had been halted by long recessions and a seven-year war to push the Chinese back to their own country. A second Dark Ages was throwing its shadow over the northern hemisphere.

"Don't forget your mittens now," said mother Mary.

"Why, Mom? We're not playing outside anyway, got to sit inside the whole day... boring!" In her thick snow suit Sarah walked stiffly to the door, nylon pants swishing at each step. Obediently she stuck out her sausage-like arms and Mary stuffed the unwieldy mittens around the tiny fingers. "Bye Mommy, bye Daddy."

Once again Carl scooped up his daughter and between sharply cut walls of snow carried her to the road.

In the barn, cows were belching mightily. Ordinarily they

would have been milked by now. He had spent all morning clearing a path to the road and the barn with the snowblower. But the snow kept falling back from walls which were already too high. And it was still snowing.

The bus door swung open. He felt the bus's heat on his face as he set Sarah on the highest step of the door opening. "You think you'll make it back, Sam?" Carl asked.

The old pensioner grinned. He'd heard the same question at all pick-up points. Folks remembered last winter when the kids had been in town for two weeks. The winter before it had been one week, and the winter before that, two days.

He pointed at the snowplow. "Them things, Carl, what would we do without them, hey? But God is mightier still!"

Carl smiled as he escaped the automatic door. Sam inserted God any time, any place — he was a Calvinist turned Pentecostal. As Carl gave the bus a friendly pat with his bare hand he wondered why Pentecostals never turned into Calvinists.

He had touched the steel of the bus for just a moment and his fingers tingled fiercely. He looked at his hand. Last

winter he had used a crowbar to quickly pry a

hubcap off a wheel. The result: two days in the hospital with five fingers minus skin. It had been the most physically painful experience of his life.

Rubbing his hands, he slowly walked back to the house, automatically stepping into the imprint his boots had left a few minutes ago. He looked down. Since five o'clock that morning another six inches had fallen. If it went on like that he would have to use the blower again so Sarah could get back into the house.

Smelling a burnt pancake, Mary turned away from the

door. Ah well, she could scrape off the black edge and still eat it. A shame to throw it away. She sat at the kitchen table and moved the syrup bottle pattern-like over the pancake, making sure the dripping, slightly swirling lines never crossed. She had done that as a small girl and still did it. It was the only game she played all day. The rest was work, work, work. She popped too large and too hot pieces in her mouth, cooling them with gulps of milk. Always in a hurry!

Carl would be back any moment and she knew he half expected her to help him milk the cows because he was already late. Below her she heard the furnace click off. Impossible! She had turned it up to 30. She flipped the switch beside kitchen door. The fluorescent light above the kitchen table didn't hum. Shucks. No hydro. That meant milking by hand.

They had pleaded with the township people to do something about those hydro wires which had dipped from pole to

pole for more than a century... well, for as long as she had lived, anyway. In the age of computerized technology the farm country had become even more of a backwater. In every city hydro lines were buried. But not in the townships, no sir-ree! Just a bit of snow, and crack, down they'd come! It would be at least six hours before the small hydro crew got things working again.

"No hydro, Carl!" He was such a patient man! A bit slow on the uptake, but steady as a Ferguson tractor.

"Well, Mary," he drawled, "it has happened before, no use picketing the hydro office. We've still got our hands, haven't we?"

"What d'you do with such an iceblock?" she thought. "Before he'd fly into a passion, you'd have to set fire to his beard! His greying beard — not even 30 and already grey."

Her eyes softened. He had had his share of misery with pigs which sold below floor

Continued on page 12...



Ingrid Jøen

The return of the Ice Age

Continued from page 11.

price, with grain that stood frozen in the fields, unable to form ears because of early frost, with cows that died mysteriously.

"Can't use the washing machine anyway, might as well help you milking."

"That's my girl. It'll be nice and cozy to be together in the barn. I'll crank up the old generator. Maybe it will give us enough juice to make us a thermos full of coffee."

Underneath his calm she felt his tension. When he plucked his beard endlessly she knew he was worrying — worried he'd have trouble milking with one hand.

She went over to him and held his hands in hers. He scrunched his eyes as if in pain as he pulled his right hand from her grasp. She should have thought of that. In cold weather his hand started to hurt. 'Just a crowbar. How could he have been so dumb?'

"Maybe it won't be so bad on the warm teats," she said.

"So, you're thinking ahead, 'sweet girl.' They stood for a while, not wanting to break the spell of warm togetherness. They kissed. Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow!"

In the humid-warm barn they soon shed their insulated jackets. Less encumbered, Mary felt light and airy as she placed an old-fashioned milkstool beside a cow. How long had this stool been hanging from that rusty nail in the wall? Her great-grandfather, an immigrant from the Netherlands, had bought the farm some 90 years ago. It had been modernized since and they probably had kept the small stools as relics of the past. She had heard enough stories about that grand old man. In Friesland

he'd always milked by hand. Why get a milking installation? Much cheaper to milk by hand.

Emptying her first pail, she watched Carl as she passed him. He was milking with both hands, face leaning away from her against the flank of the cow.

"Carl?"

"Yes?" He kept his face away. There was a tremor in his Yes.

Suspecting, she walked around him and he muttered, "Don't do that."

She knelt on the cold cement floor and saw him bite his lips, saw his cheeks wet. Quickly he rubbed his face against the stubby hairs of the cow's flank and mumbled softly, "It hurts like hell, Mary."

"Can't you milk with one hand?"

"No, I have to get used to it, it will pass."

She didn't want to insist. That would be useless anyway. She went back to her own cow. Her own hands were painful too, but nothing compared to his. 'Keep his mind off it. Diversion! Had he read the latest *Centurion* already?'

He usually finished the thing before she had a change to read it. He had a sharp mind. He had been a professor in computer science until the universities closed for lack of government support. Hundreds of professors were still looking for new jobs. When Dad had had his first heart attack, they had moved from the city to the farm, Carl more eager than she. He had grown up on a farm and knew the ropes. But it had never worked well, somehow.

They grew new varieties of grain and corn because the growing season had become shorter. They had had to change their lifestyles because of the much longer, colder winters. Nudged by a tremendous meteor which had lit Earth near the South Pole, the globe had tilted and the North Pole had begun to reach its icy tentacles deep into the northern hemisphere.

Suddenly Africa had stopped being on the receiving end of Western World charity. The rains started falling on that continent as they had done for centuries north of the equator. The sun's rays became milder. Ah, one could work in such an invigorating climate! Suddenly industries sprang up all over the continent. Within 20 years wealth had shifted from North to South. Churches blossomed;

cathedrals were built where mosques had been torn down.

"Carl, have you read the last *Centurion*? Do you really think God is punishing us with these cold winters?"

It usually took him a while to formulate his thoughts. But not now. As if he had anticipated her question, he jumped his counter-question on her in a flash.

"What makes you think that, Mary?"

Now to get him away from that cow! "Let's have some coffee, shall we?" As he stood up he smiled at her.

"What kind of an answer is that, my dear woman."

Sitting beside each other on

know what it meant, but it came in handy when irritation replaced reason.

He raised his voice as if lecturing. "You know, Mary, we here in the Western world have been awfully greedy and self-centred. The world was heading for a global economy, but we didn't include the nations which needed it most. For decades on TV we saw scenes of famines and slaughter in these countries, and we became immune to it. Bombarded with an overload of global information, the human mind just can't sift through it anymore."

"Of course, after the Third World War we had to rebuild our own economies and that

people had learned to farm properly, they wouldn't be in such a mess!" Or he'd reason: 'Half of the money we give goes for administration costs anyway. I know these darned charitable organizations.'

"After Dad died, I went through his papers. To my amazement I discovered that when Mom gave her \$50 to PamAfrica, he saw fit to donate \$10,000 to build a new church building — a building we didn't actually need because we lost so many members to a Pentecostal megachurch down the road. Mary, if you multiply that kind of Christian stewardship a million times... You get the picture? Ja, I think God is punishing us. And we deserve it too. We ourselves haven't done too well, either."

Mary wanted to remind him of the bank loans they had to pay off, but just then they heard the honk of the school bus.

"They must expect tons of snow. Carl, otherwise they wouldn't have sent the kids home early."

She took Sarah to the barn. The house was stone cold because there still was no hydro.

That night another meter of snow fell. Carl couldn't open the large barn doors to push the snowblower through. The barn would be their home for a while.

It continued to snow for a week. Soon daylight no longer filtered through the cracks of the hayloft walls. A shimmering darkness descended upon Earth. The generator had long since stopped chugging, rendering hotplate and bare lightbulbs things of the past. For weeks their only food was the still warm milk straight from the cows, meat from a calf they had slaughtered, and hard cattle corn. They had to keep a small fire going, for after a week Carl had run out of matches. Luckily there was no shortage of firewood. Carl just ripped up the floor of the hayloft.

No books, no Bible, no magazines. Had the barn been closer to the house they could have dug a tunnel to the house. They kept reasonably warm by sleeping under layers of potato sacks, covered with another layer of hay.

To Mary's dismay their clothes began to smell terribly, but there was nothing she could do. They kept themselves as clean as possible by melting



the dirty workbench, holding cups with lukewarm coffee, they heard the chuck-chuck of the generator in the lean-to. "God punished the Israelites in the Old Testament when they disobeyed, didn't he?" Mary said.

Now he was his old self again. Holding the cup in his sore hand, the balm warmth lessened the pain somewhat.

"Wish I could look inside his head," she thought, 'to see those thought wheels move slowly.'

"Ja," he said pensively, "ja, it might well be that God is punishing us."

Ja! It was one of two words which linked him to his immigrant forebears. The other word was *verdikke*. They didn't

took a while. But even when things normalized in the Western world, the famines in other countries continued. Millions of Africans and South Americans and Chinese had to die before we were sufficiently shocked to send large food shipments again. The Bible tells us to give with gladness, but we began to ask ourselves, "Will there ever be an end to it?"

"Mary, I'll tell you something I've never told you before. After the Chinese War, my dad had some good years on the farm, made plenty of money. During those years there was a horrible famine in Ethiopia. My mother wanted to give \$500 to PamAfrica, but Dad thought \$50 was plenty. He'd say: 'If those

the snow which had blown through the cracks into the hayloft.

After the daily chores there was little else to do. Heat makes for lethargy. But so does cold. How long could they keep up a cheerfulness not rooted in happy hearts? They moved slowly, like zombies who had lost all meaning in life. *How long, O Lord, how long?*

Fortunately, Carl had kept a supply of small batteries in the barn for his radio. From day to day horrifying news crackled through the barn. Whole cities lay buried under meters of snow, thousands of people went missing. No let-up was forecast.

Little Sarah got bronchitis. They prayed that it wouldn't develop into pneumonia. "Carl, we have to do something!"

"I don't know what to do, Mary, we can only pray that the thaw sets in." They should have had a telephone line going to the barn, but he had wanted to work without ringing interruptions. Now, what use would

a telephone be anyway?

The first week they had heard the muffled drone of

helicopters.

Now the snow-blanketed world was quiet. They lost com-



plete contact with the outside world when their last radio battery gave up the ghost.

One day, after having been confined for five weeks, they heard the sound of a helicopter again. There was a steady drone, as if it kept circling the barn. Carl went up into the hayloft, put his hands to his mouth and hollered as loud he could, knowing all the time that the sound of his voice could not penetrate the snow, or the machine's roar.

Suddenly his face became warm. Utterly amazed he looked at the roof. Rivulets of water travelled down the planks and soon he felt water dropping onto his face. He felt more heat; it became almost unbearable. Then he knew. They were using a flame thrower to melt the snow. Despite his joy he worried that they would set the barn on fire. With a thud someone landed on the roof and soon he heard the clanking of an axe.

Mary had lugged Sarah to the hayloft. As splinters rained down the De Jagers moved into a corner. They saw a hooded head appear in the opening above them. "Anybody here?" The words were spoken with a strange accent.

"Ja, three persons," shouted Carl.

"OK, I'm coming down!"

Anchored with a wide nylon strap, a man swung down slowly. When his feet found the floor he unbuckled himself. A friendly, black face grinned at them.

"Pleased to meet you, brother and sister and little girl. We've come to get you. My name is Kisher Kaburi. I belong to a rescue team from the Christian Church of Ethiopia. Come on, little girl, you first!"

Herman de Jong is a retired teacher, upholsterer and mental health worker living in Jordan, Ont.

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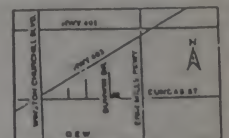
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A hug for Christmas

Berta Hosmar

Friday, April 20, 1990, 7 p.m. It was raining and getting dark. Betty Langerak was at her job at a local nursing home in Whitby, Ontario. Her husband, Dick, was just leaving home for a meeting when the phone rang. It was the kind of call every parent dreads: their 23-year-old daughter, Bonnie, had been in a car accident. Yes, she was still alive, but barely.

The next few days were a blur for Bonnie's exhausted family. In a deep coma, with suspected brain injuries, Bonnie was transferred to a hospital in Toronto. A brain scan revealed that the area of her brain that connects to the spinal cord was bleeding. Surgery was performed and Bonnie was watched day and night.

Day after day she did not respond. On the thirtieth day, Bonnie opened her eyes. Her family was ecstatic, though doctors warned that she was not focusing on anything or anyone.

The next day, nothing had changed. Nor the next; nor the next.

Then, after 11 days Bonnie seemed able to see! The Langeraks believed in a miracle.

Her mother was now spending 12-hour days by her side, and her dad and sister, Liz, would come by after work. It was hard not to think of the past. Bonnie had been a happy little girl, bubbly and eager to

please. Later, she learned to play classical guitar and helped vacation Bible school teachers by playing for the children. She had a strong will.



Bonnie Langerak, before her accident.

As a teenager, when growing up can be painful and low self-esteem is common, Bonnie rode an emotional and physical roller coaster. She developed anorexia — starving herself — then bulimia, another eating disorder which compels one to "binge and purge." Help was sought at various institutions.

As time went on things normalized. Bonnie made new friends and had plans to go to college. Her parents thanked God for the changes in her life. And then...

Two months after the accident, the Toronto doctors told the Langeraks there was little

else they could do. Perhaps attempts at physical rehabilitation would help.

Going home

Thus began a grueling 15 months in an Oshawa hospital — with few results. Then on to Hamilton, where therapists showed the Langeraks how to provide stimulation to which Bonnie might respond. It became clear that the best life for Bonnie would be at home.

A van was bought and fitted with a lift. Dick, a teacher and handyman, winterized the family solarium where Bonnie could spend time. A rail was mounted on the ceiling for a special lift system, and a customized bathroom was built.

Now four-and-a-half years after the accident, Bonnie's brain functions normally, but since most of her voluntary nervous system has been cut off from the brain, much of her body won't respond from the eyes down: "locked-in syndrome."

There's some hope that with therapy some neurons will reconnect. But for that to happen Bonnie's body must remain flexible. So every morning, Betty, Dick, and Liz, who lives close by, exercise Bonnie. Her every need must be taken care of, a 24-hour-a-day job. A homemaker comes a few times a week, and volunteers help out as well.

Despite all this, Bonnie can express emotion and read printed signs, responding to questions or statements by blinking her eyes. She particularly seems to love children and people her own age; she smiles at funny TV programs. She teases by refusing to open her eyes for one family member while she may do so for another. A visitor gets the impression she is reasonably content. Yet when she tries so hard to communicate she's a person struggling mightily to get out of a severely disabled body.

A testing of faith

Her family, too, struggles. Betty has had to accept the fact that her daughter again needs the care she received as a child. Having given up her job to care for Bonnie, Betty's world has become small. She struggles with periods of despair, especially after a setback for Bonnie, such as seizures needing

emergency treatment. Then God seems far away, and winters become long and lonely.

Dick, who is now retired, can offer more assistance, and Liz helps too.

Dick wonders, "How do you accept a loving God when he has allowed a young life to be destroyed, just when things were getting better? You read in the book of Job: 'My ways are higher than your ways.' But you still see darkness; like Job, we can't rise above God's level."

He begins to answer his own question when he adds, "You pray for light until you acknow-

A God-sent 'small mercy'

One of the ways God speaks is in surprises. Last Christmas Betty was the first recipient of one of those surprises.

Bonnie can move her left arm. When Betty gave her a hug, for the first time, Bonnie returned the hug! When Betty screamed for joy, Bonnie smiled. When Liz excitedly asked for a hug, she also felt Bonnie's arm around her.

Then it was Dad's turn. With an impish look, Bonnie refused to give out another hug until



Bonnie with her caregivers. Clockwise from left: Liz, Dick, Betty and Bonnie Langerak.

ledge that our lives are in his loving hands. He gives strength for each day and forgives our yesterdays. You can give thanks for small mercies. When we have our moments of darkness and the load seems too heavy, God speaks to us with a word, a letter or a visit from somebody. He turns on the light again and sets us free to serve him in thankfulness for his love, grace and daily care."

Dick begged her to relent.

For a moment it seemed the old Bonnie was back. It was the only Christmas present that mattered that year.

Berta Hosmar is an occasional contributor to CC who lives in Whitby, Ont.

Don't Forget...

It's time to extend Christmas and/or New Year's greetings through C.C.



Starting with the Christmas issue (December 2), and continuing with the December 9, 16 and 23 issues, we plan to reserve a special section on the classified pages for your season's greetings. Deadline for the Christmas issue is November 23! Kindly formulate your greetings to family and friends now (the message should not exceed 40 words) and send it in today, enclosing payment of \$20.00 as well.

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Experience Advent as a penitential season

Marian Van Til

What does Advent mean to you?

In our secular world, Advent 1994 means 28 shopping days till Christmas, including Sundays, of course. (Depending on what day of the week Christmas falls, Advent can span from 22 to 28 days.)

Christmas and its preparatory season, the latter getting longer and longer, are now referred to vaguely as "The Holidays." In fact, it is barely politically correct to wish a stranger a Merry Christmas. Who knows: you might be addressing a Jew, a Muslim, an atheist or a druid, none of whom wants to think about having a merry Christmas. The proper, all-purpose greeting has become "Happy Holidays!"

Caroling, too, must be innocuous "Deck the Halls,"

"Santa Claus is Coming to Town," or a harmless, nostalgic verse of "Silent Night" are okay. If you hear "religious" carols, it's probably as muzak in malls, where nobody knows or listens to the words, or where instrumental versions of such carols prevent any offense. Even Salvation Army bell ringers are silenced in some places because the bells are "annoying" to shoppers.

In that cultural context it's difficult for us Christians to observe a few days, much less a season of Advent. Even if your Advent weeks are quite sane, chances are you think about Advent only on its four Sundays.

On each of those Sundays your church may light one more candle of an Advent wreath, or incorporate special Scripture readings or Advent hymns into the morning service, but

probably not both services (it's Advent both a.m. and p.m., isn't it?)

Parallel to Lent and Easter

So what about those other 24 days of the Advent season?

The following may be helpful in maintaining the right focus during all of the Advent

+ Recognize that Advent is a penitential season as well as a celebrative one. This is a fact about Advent's function and place in the church year which is seemingly not well-known among Reformed Christians.

In the history of the Christian church, Advent as a season of penitence, culminating in the 12-day feast of Christmas, parallels the penitential weeks of Lent which culminate in the glorious Easter feast (which lasts not one day, but 40 days,

to Pentecost).

Why is this important?

Because a penitent spirit is an antidote to the greed and secular spirit around us. Using Advent as a four-week period for confession of both personal and communal sin is one of the ways we can rightly prepare for Christ's coming. It will help us re-focus on why Christ needed to lower himself by taking on human form (the beginning of his suffering).

Such a spirit will also intensify our joyous celebration when Christmas finally dawns. That, incidentally, is the symbolism behind the Advent wreath tradition which uses three purple candles, one pink one, and a white central candle: as the Advent weeks pass, the Sun of Righteousness begins to appear on the horizon (the pink candle), until it dawns in a

blaze of white light (the Christ candle).

+ Set aside a time each day for devotions specifically focused on Advent. Supper time seems ideal for this, particularly if you have children. There are many sources of Advent daily devotions (including *The Banner*). They may combine Scripture readings with a short meditation, Scripture with a suggested Advent hymn, or Scripture only, chosen with Advent themes in mind.

A good source for Advent Scripture lessons is a lectionary found in Anglican or Lutheran hymnals, for example. Lectionaries appoint specific Scripture readings for each day of the season (and for the entire year).

+ Combine your devotions with the lighting of a family Advent wreath. A home Advent wreath (as a diningroom-table centerpiece, for example) is not only exciting for young children, it visually reinforces the spiritual focus of your devotions. (Don't hesitate to do this even if you live alone!) Its lighting can be accompanied by singing a short stanza of an Advent hymn or children's song. Singing is a wonderful addition to any devotional time, personal or family.

If your church uses an Advent wreath and you prefer something different, try a Jesse tree. You should be able to find out about this and other national or ethnic Advent/Christmas traditions at your church or local public library.

+ Choose someone (or one person for each person in your family) on whom you will focus special attention during Advent. There are people of all ages who are lonely, who may be going through tough personal or family times, or who are ill or grieving and would appreciate your thoughtfulness. Send a card, a brief note of encouragement; drop off a small gift; shovel their driveway; run an errand; bake cookies — whatever would be helpful to that particular person.

Film Review

A secular miracle

Marian Van Til

Miracle on 34th Street

Rated Family

Stars Richard Attenborough, Elizabeth Perkins, Dylan McDermott, Mara Wilson
Based on the 1947 screenplay by George Seaton; Directed by Les Mayfield

Some critics seem to think that the original, immensely popular 1947 version of this film was a work of imagination and whimsy, and that this remake is both unnecessary and "pedestrian," as one of them put it.

I say, "Bah, humbug!" to that. This remake is a good one, and emotionally, it's a somewhat better brand of mush. Religiously, they're both tainted mushrooms, but we'll get to that later. I came to these conclusions by watching the current film one afternoon and the 1947 version the next morning.

This story tries to get people to recover the "Spirit of Christmas." No, not Christ, unfortunately, but qualities which are fruits of the Holy Spirit:

love, kindness, generosity, truthfulness, selflessness.

The representative of those "fruits" is a saint of sorts: Saint Nick, a.k.a. Kris Kringle, an elderly man who keeps insisting he's the real item. (Kringle is played with great passion and compassion by British director/actor Richard Attenborough.) When Kringle fills in for an inebriated Santa at New York City's Coles Department Store Thanksgiving Day parade, he's thoroughly convincing, and that starts him, and us, on this adventure.

As the store's Santa Klaus, Kringle seems to know just what every tot needs; he's even able to converse in sign language with a deaf girl. CC readers may find it humorous to know that in the 1947 version, the girl is a Dutch war orphan recently adopted by Americans. The lonely little girl is delighted when "Sinter Klaas" speaks to her in Dutch and they sing a Dutch Christmas song together. (Now why would the current filmmakers opt for being deaf instead of Dutch?)

Kringle's Santa Claus doesn't pitch Coles' merchandise unless it's the best and least expensive. Otherwise, he tells parents which of Coles' competitors has the best deals. Before Kringle

can be fired for that, customers begin to respond positively, surprised at the giant store's unselfishness. Business booms, and the store pulls from the brink of bankruptcy.

Who do you say I am?

The story really centres around whether major characters — and, of course, we viewers — believe. Is Kringle truly Santa Claus (or Saint Nick, Sinter Klaas, or whatever children around the world call him)? Do we believe in the qualities he represents?

Young Susan Walker is a non-believer because that's what her mother, Dori, has taught her. (Susan is spunkily played by little Mara Wilson, who was the youngest daughter in *Mrs. Doubtfire*. She and Attenborough make the film.) Dori (Elizabeth Perkins) is the Coles executive who was in charge of the parade and of hiring Kringle. She's a realist; she has learned life can be tough; so she doesn't want her daughter to cope by retreating into a fantasy world.

Dori has a lawyer neighbor, Brian, who is in love with her and who dearly loves Susan too. But Dori keeps him at arm's length. Meanwhile, Kringle is

framed and committed to a mental hospital. Brian believes in Santa Klaus/Kris Kringle. And he defends Kringle at his court hearing. Needless to say, all ends well, for all the characters.

The North American Santa Klaus figure poses a problem for Christians. He was singlehandedly popularized by Clement Moore, a biblical scholar, of all things, in "Twas the Night Before Christmas," written in 1822.

A secular gospel

As the real Christ has been shoved from Christmas, secular society has turned to Santa Claus as a secular Christ: he knows hearts, he can work miracles, he brings joy and reconciliation.

If one accepts at face-value the dollops of sentimentality and goodwill served up in this old-fashioned movie, it's a charming way to spend an afternoon. But underneath the charm is a nagging question: In what, or whom, is this film asking us to believe? Even the demons believe.

~~~~~

With a little thought, despite office parties, family get-togethers, Christmas shopping or baking, or other things that take our attention, it won't be hard to come up with other good ways to keep focused on Christ's coming during Advent.



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*The Spirit does not make us all  
speak one language or make us all  
be one nation or one culture;  
rather he fashions a church in  
which every language and every  
culture has its own gifts ... with  
which to enrich the common song  
or praise.*

*What the church needs is not the  
unity of the "melting pot," but  
the unity of a choir where many  
voices sing, not in unison but in  
harmony, or of a garden where a  
thousand different flowers bloom  
in breathtaking variety.*

Jamie R. Vidal

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SCORR is an arm of the Synod of the CRC  
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*You come, O Lord, with gladness,  
in mercy and goodwill,  
to bring an end to sadness  
and bid our fears be still.  
In patient expectation  
we live for that great day  
when a renewed creation  
your glory shall display*

Paul Gerhardt, 1653

**BEST WISHES FOR A JOYOUS HOLIDAY SEASON**  
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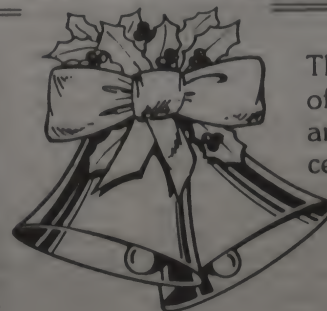
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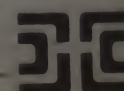
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of Dordt College wish you joy  
and peace in this season, as we  
celebrate the birth of the King.

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**God's Hands In God's World**



# Sing, O barren woman

Narrative poem by Harry der Nederlanden

I didn't know where Nazareth was.  
I admit. I am a simple man.  
That donkey — it was the only  
one I ever owned. What made me  
give it to that couple  
from Nazareth, I don't know.

Usually, I am a careful, thrifty man,  
not given to such impulses. Magda's  
right, it was out of character.  
"Whatever possessed you?" she  
still asks. "For months you  
talked about buying a donkey,  
and suddenly — poof! — you give  
it away: 'Here you go,  
take it,' you say. To perfect  
strangers. 'Take my donkey  
and God bless.'" She shakes her  
head in disbelief, still laughing.

The first time I told her,  
she threw her skirt over her  
head. I thought she was going  
to start wailing or moaning.  
Not her. She was laughing:  
her sides shook, her bosom  
shook, she shook all over.  
First I was relieved, but then  
I was miffed. No one likes to  
be taken for a fool. But then  
she just hugged me, held me,  
like she hadn't for some time.

Women are funny: you buy  
them a donkey to make them happy  
and they get all upset;  
you give it away and... listen  
that's her singing in the garden.  
She hasn't done that in years.

"A donkey!" she cried when I  
first brought it home. "Am I  
an old woman that I need a donkey  
to ride on? There's nothing  
wrong with my legs, Moishe. No  
matter how high I ride, Moishe,  
they will still pity me and  
call me barren Magda."

No even though she did ride it,  
it did not cheer her up.  
But listen to her now; she's  
been like that ever since —  
even through the slaughter.  
Serene, that's what the Rabbi  
called her; serene, at peace.

When Magda told the Rabbi,  
he said, "He who loans

his ass to one in need  
will never want another steed."

"Sure!" snorted my brother, Jeb,  
"but did the Rabbi give them a donkey?"  
Not him. And he owns two."  
Jeb's been a bit down on rabbis  
and priests of late, with reason.  
The slaughter of his only son,  
his firstborn, cut out his soul.  
But his wife has given birth  
again and new life returns to him.  
For some time after the slaughter,  
he was one of the walking dead.  
If it had not been for Magda...  
he and his wife would have sunk  
into the earth, buried themselves.

"God will give you many more  
sons," the Rabbi told him,  
"in place of the one you lost."

"Children are not donkeys,  
Rabbi," he snapped. "You cannot  
exchange one for another."  
But his bitterness fades  
day by day like the scars

he slashes on his cheeks.  
The child is healing him.

The other day I overheard  
him asking Magda, "That couple  
from Nazareth — do you really  
think their child was the one  
Herod was after?" I didn't  
hear her answer, but I know  
she does. "A strange God,"  
my brother muttered, "who lets  
my son and a thousand others  
perish that one may live.  
I hope that he was the promised King  
and that one day he will come  
riding out of that desert  
with blood-spattered garments  
and a sword of fire and smoke  
to nail Herod's hide  
to the gates of Jerusalem!"

"But would that bring back  
even one of the slaughtered babes?"  
Magda asked quietly. "You know  
it would not. The Romans would  
come and slaughter more, many  
more, of our sons."

Yes, life is made of strange equations,  
hard exchanges, substitutions.  
I traded my donkey for... nothing;  
but Magda got something. Call  
it peace, serenity, whatever.

One day the Rabbi caught me  
standing here, looking out  
across the desert. "Tell me,  
Moishe," he said, "what are you  
looking for? Do you also expect  
your donkey to come back from  
the wilderness carrying a king?"  
His eyes twinkled, but he wasn't  
just teasing.

There are those...  
but I'm no mad visionary;  
I'm just a simple man.  
It is enough for me that  
Magda is singing again  
like a young girl,  
as she did  
when she was a  
bride.

*Harry der Nederlanden wrote this story and drew the  
accompanying illustration for a Christmas card he and his  
wife, Rose, sent to friends last year. He lives in St  
Catharines, Ont.*





# CRACKS

Beatrice Vandervelde

The day started as any other. Mother had worked all night. She had just come home and was eager for us to be gone so she could get to bed. She was shorttempered, especially with me, the eldest of her three sons.

"Get your butt in gear, Tom," she greeted me when I entered the kitchen. "We've waited long enough. There's work to be done."

"Why can't David do something," I grumbled. There he was, sitting at the table like a prince, waiting to be served.

"You leave him out of this," Mom called back, slamming the peanut butter and jam jars onto the table. "If you'd take shorter showers, we'd all be better off." She gave the porridge a vicious stir then waited impatiently for me to get the bowls on the table so she could ladle it in. "Don't just stand there. Look for what else is needed," she muttered. "You guys expect me to do all the work around here. Well, I'm tired of it, do you hear?" She would have gone on but just that minute Dad walked in.

"Mornin'," he barked. He had dropped the "good" long ago. Mornings were not good, not at our house. Not any more. Not since David had been deathly sick. That illness four years ago had changed everything at our house, forever it seemed.

"Rickie! Breakfast. Right now!" Mom yelled.

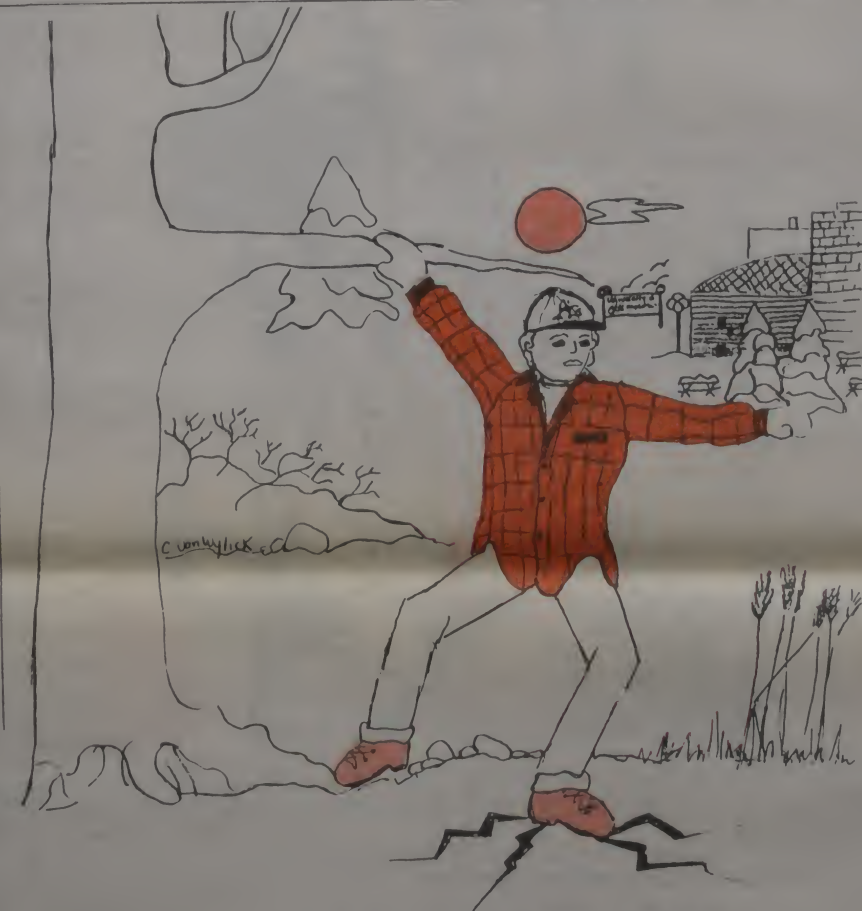
Rickie walked in, adjusting buttons on a shirt.

"Not that one!" Mom gave a snort of disgust. "That was on my sewing pile. There's a big hole under the arm. Here, take it off." She yanked it off his back.

"Then what do I wear?" Rickie wailed. "All my stuff is dirty."

"Sure! And that's my fault, too, isn't it?" Mom pushed him toward his room. "You'll find something," she said. "And hurry. Your cereal is getting cold."

"More coffee?" Dad growled. Mom ignored him. Actually, she turned her back on him while she addressed David, my ten-year-old brother. "More



toast, dear?"

David was the centre of Mom's life. No matter how rushed, no matter how tired, when Mom turned to David she was a different person — the way she used to be; the way I liked to remember her. Always time and kind words for David. They often say the middle child gets left out. Not at our house. David was between Rickie and me in age, but it seemed that we fell between the cracks. Maybe Dad, too.

I ate my cereal, then busied myself making Rickie's lunch, and my own. I gave both of us an extra lick of peanut butter and added a thick layer of jelly. I closed up the sandwich before Mom could see.

There were more angry words, causing Dad to push

back his chair abruptly. Why did we even bother eating breakfast together if they couldn't be civil to each other? Dad grabbed his jacket and stumbled out the door without any farewell, leaving his dirty dishes for someone else to stack. Me, of course. Sheer habit. I piled them in the sink. I'd probably end up washing them, too. It seemed I was the only one bothered by the mess in the house.

I hurried through breakfast, eager to be gone. I urged Rickie on so we could take our time strolling down the drive. That was the best part of the day, ambling down the drive, away from the clutter and bickering. A new day. For the brief length of that walk I could forget my troubles. I wished the feeling

could last.

The air was crisp, the sky clear. Snow crunched underfoot. The sun shone brightly.

As soon as the bus came in sight, school came to mind. Not that I cared. I preferred that to home. But lately things hadn't been going too smoothly at school, either. I needed a break and Christmas was still more than a month away. Today should be all right, though. Probably an assembly for Remembrance Day; classes would be short.

I helped Rickie onto the bus, clambered aboard after him and quickly took one of the empty seats about halfway down. Settling into the vinyl for the eight kilometre trip into town, I took a deep breath. The sun felt warm on my face. I leaned back

my head and closed my eyes.

We were beside the university picnic grounds only a few kilometres from home when I suddenly had a brilliant flash. Quick as a wink I dove between the seats, head between my knees. I pulled my coat collar tight around my face and blew for all I was worth. Then, taking a deep breath, I pinched my nose until I had to let go or burst. My face burned. I was hot and slightly dizzy. Straightening my body, I sidled out of the seat. As I made my way to the front of the bus, I allowed myself to be swayed with each movement.

Linda noticed me in her mirror. "What are you doing?" she demanded.

"I don't feel good," I answered weakly. "I'm gonna be sick." I moved my free hand to my mouth while the one holding my bag clutched at my stomach.

Linda slowed the bus. Her startled look turned to genuine concern. "Could be flu," she said. "Lots of that going around. Or was it something you ate? Here, let me feel your forehead." She stopped the bus at the side of the road, put on the blinkers, and felt my head. It was moist and warm. "What do you want to do?" she asked.

"Get out!" My whisper exploded as if I was desperate. "I need fresh air." I paused a moment, then added, "I can walk back home."

"I can't just let you off," Linda said, shaking her head.

"So I have to be sick at school all day?" I hunched my body and made a noise as if I were about to gag.

Linda frowned. "I don't like this," she mumbled. Suddenly she brightened. "Maybe Mrs. Hensl here can drive you home." She turned her head to look at the farmyard we had just passed. "The car's there. She's home. You go right over and ask her, you hear? I'll call later to see if you got home all right."

"Better not," I said quickly, thinking fast. "Mom worked last night. She'll be sleeping." I looked up at Linda with my



eyes half-closed. Man, I really *did* feel sick. "I'll be okay," I promised.

Linda opened the door and I cautiously stepped down. "Thanks," I croaked as I gingerly touched solid ground.

"You go right to the Hensls now," Linda admonished. "Be careful." She closed the door and set the bus in motion. I stayed put until the bus was out of sight around the bend. Then I allowed myself a whoop.

It worked! A whole, wonderful day to myself to explore the fields and woods around the university. First I'd better get off the road, though, before a car came along.

I dropped to the ditch, walked till a slight path between the undergrowth led into the bush, and followed it. Twigs and thorns tugged at my clothing. What kind of bushes were these? I pushed them aside with my arms but they had a mind of their own and came back swinging. Ouch! Rubbing my cheek softly to ease the sting, I stooped down to avoid more growth and soon reached a clearing from which I could see the lake, covered with a layer of ice. How thick?

At the nearest shore I hooked my arm around a slender tree as if it were a dear friend and carefully put one foot on the smooth surface. It creaked. I banged my heel on the ice. The first blow broke through; a numbing cold seeped in.

At the walking bridge across a narrow in the lake there was a splash. No ice here. I leaned over the chest-high railing. All I saw were ever-expanding rings of ripples on the otherwise smooth surface. Suddenly a head popped out of the water a few yards away.

"Ha! Was that you, beaver?"

I asked it softly, but at the sound of my voice, he disappeared. For one moment I followed his direction by slight ripples; then there was no trace of him. Too deep? I scanned the shore and lake but saw no more signs. Could he go under the ice for long distances and still find

a breathing hole somewhere? Or would he break the ice when he surfaced? What would he do when the ice was really thick? Ah, to be free like that beaver.

After the bridge, the path split in three directions. Two were familiar and led to the university campus. The third followed the lake, disappearing behind a hill. As I looked to where it might lead, I spied a peaked roof.

Overcome with curiosity I walked toward that pointed roof till I saw that it belonged to a little cottage, settled comfortably into the earth. Stepping through tall grass, I reached the other side. Two windows, covered by wads of insulation, flanked two small doors. They drew me like a magnet.

Cautiously I stepped up. Leaning on two rusty brackets, a two-by-four held the doors shut. Looking around to make sure no one was watching, my hand reached for the wood. It didn't budge. I leaned my shoulder heavily against one door, then tried again. This time the block moved, squeaking loudly in protest as it rubbed against the rusty metal. I dropped the wood to the ground and with a slight tug opened the doors.

Straw. Nothing but yellow straw from top to bottom. I stared, then closed the doors almost angrily.

Retracing my steps, I saw a wider path I hadn't noticed earlier which led past a square pool of murky water. I wrinkled my nose in distaste but there was no smell. Further down a trickle of water from somewhere fed the lake. My eyes raked over several shacks: two white ones with flat roofs and one of dull sheet metal with missing windows. But as I walked by, a glorious plan crystallized. Not just hooky from school for one day — I would run away. Leave home. I could live here.

I was delighted. A kaleidoscope of ideas crowded my head only to crash when I realized the sheds were locked.

Well, what had I expected? Doors opening automatically?

How could I break the locks?

I turned away but something registered. I looked again. The last lock was not through the loop. I could get inside! It took a moment to penetrate.

Anyone coming? Again I looked around casually. My stomach was churning; I felt hot and sweaty. I swallowed, reached for the door and pulled

were really cold, for instance.

I looked around a bit longer and then got busy. First the window I pulled the boat from the side of the hut, picked up the window and carefully fitted it into the space, top, then bottom. It was the right size but too loose. I glanced around for a piece of wood to wedge under-

bing one of the chairs, I sat down. There was planning to do.

The sun was high overhead when I finally emerged. It had been silly to spend so much time inside, but now my new home was ready. Besides, once here, I'd have lots of chance to roam and explore — every day, if I wanted to. With great gusto I retraced my steps to the highway and then on to my parents' home.

The driveway was empty.

Mom was probably out shopping, I reflected. She hadn't slept long. I let myself into the house and gathered things: sleeping bag, extra clothes, food, toothbrush, candle, matches, two favourite books. I bundled everything together and carried it to some bushes. Then I ran back to the house to write a note.

Where should I leave it? On top of the pile of dishes in the sink? Or should I do them and leave the kitchen the way I liked to find it?

Should I write a note to Rickie? Suddenly I felt bad about leaving him. How would he manage? Would he think I'd deserted him? Should I wait and take him along? We could leave tonight — together! I pondered as I cleaned. Suddenly I felt uneasy about the whole affair. The longer I waited, the worse I felt. I couldn't desert Rickie. I'd have to take him along. I'd have to wait.

And wait I did! David came home from the special school he went to since his illness. Mom came home from shopping. But no Rick.

"Here, give me a hand with these groceries," Mom said brusquely when she saw me doing nothing but peering through the window. As she handed me the bags at the door she grumbled, "How can I work almost fulltime and still be expected to do everything in the house as well?" No word about the neat kitchen, of course. Well, she'd soon notice who did all the work. I shelved the groceries, then looked out the window again.

*Continued on page 20*



One quick glance around the inside, a step forward, and the door fell shut behind me. I waited for my breathing to even up.

It was somewhat dark but not gloomy — comfortable, friendly.

In front of me, two metal folding chairs faced each other. Beside them was a blue boat. A cereal box lay on the dirty floor. Fruit Loops. Empty, but firm. The shack had been used recently.

A large window stood in the far corner. It was filthy but each of its six panes were whole. If it would fit the big opening I could close up one side to make it more private and warm. The other opening could stay. If necessary I could always find cardboard to cover that; if it

neath it. Instead I saw the box. Dragging it toward me with my foot while my body held the window in place, I tore off the front, folded it into several thicknesses and stuffed it into the space. I had to wiggle it back and forth and push ever so slowly but it paid off — the window was tight. Satisfied, I wiped the dust off my hands.

Next I handled the boat. It had to be turned over so I could sleep inside. Sweat was pouring off my face as I pulled and pushed the boat onto its side, then inched it down by pulling it against my feet. It scraped some, but no real damage. I wiped the sweat off my face with my arm, then left to get some straw. Half a bale went into the bottom of the boat, the rest into a corner. Great! Grab-



# CRACKS

...continued from page 19

"Where's Rickie?" she asked with a sigh as she started supper.

I shrugged. "Playing somewhere, I guess."

Mom looked at me closely, then said, "What happened to your face? Been crawling in the dirt? Go wash it!" As if I were a little kid.

I didn't argue. No telling when she might ask more questions. But I was getting really worried. Rickie should have been home long ago. He never missed the bus.

I phoned Roger, Rickie's best friend. No Rickie there!

I felt antsy and paced back and forth. The shrill sound of the telephone interrupted me. I snatched the horn off the hook. "Hello?"

"Tom, is that you?" It was Linda. I paced little circles as she stated accusingly: "You didn't ask Mrs. Hensl for a ride. I phoned her and she didn't know about a thing. You can't do that, Tom. I'm really upset."

This won't happen again, I tell you. I could get into serious trouble." The flood of words stopped. In a different voice she continued, "But you got home okay. Good. Feeling better?"

"Yeah, fine," I answered without thinking. Then, rather abruptly: "Linda, wasn't Rickie on the bus tonight?" Heck, I had to know.

"Nnnnnno, he wasn't," she answered slowly, as if reflecting. There was also surprise in her voice. "He was worried about you this morning. Asked about it as he left the bus."

"He did?" Before she could ask further, I thanked her and hung up.

I called Roger again. "Listen carefully," I told him. "This is important. When was the last time you saw Rickie? Was he at school all day?"

It had been noon recess; after that Roger couldn't remember seeing him. "What's the matter?" he asked.

But I wasn't ready to say anything yet. "I don't know," I

answered as casually as I could. "Roger, did he act normal? Did he say anything?"

It was quiet for so long I was afraid Roger had gone. Maybe it just seemed long. "He was pretty usual. Except, well, he did wonder what happened to you."

"Whadda ya mean?"

"He asked a couple of times: What's up with Tom? Yeah, that's how he put it: Wonder what's up with Tom?"

"Darn!" I slammed the phone down, grabbed my jacket and threw it on as I raced down the drive. I looked both ways on the road knowing it was useless. "Why?" I yelled, looking up at the darkening sky. "Why did you let this happen? Rickie doesn't stand a chance. What does he know?" I yanked at my hair.

I had to find Rickie. He could get hurt. Why did he do it? Didn't he know that running away wouldn't solve anything?

I raced back toward the house across the yard. Suddenly I

tripped and landed nose down in my sleeping gear. I sobered in a flash. Taking a deep breath of night air, I forced myself to walk to the house, carrying the stuff I had left outside earlier. How childish.

"What's this?" Mom asked excitedly, waving the note I had left. I closed my eyes. Not that, too. I plodded on, heading for my room.

"I demand an answer," Mom called out shrilly. "What does this mean? And what are you doing with all that stuff?"

I stopped and turned to face her. There was no fight in me, only a dull, dull ache. "Did you read it, Mom? Did you really read it?" I asked, swallowing hard. "It means we can't go on this way. We have to talk, Mom. Sometime, we have to talk."

She looked at me, uncomprehending. Annoyed. Angry.

"I'm going upstairs to make a list. Places I went to when I ran away four years ago. Just pray we'll find Rickie as soon as you found me that time."

It was as if I had slapped her. She winced and the blood drained from her face.

"Not Rickie," she whispered. "Not my baby." She crumpled onto a chair. Her eyes closed and she wrung her hands together. Her lips moved silently; her hunched body slowly rocked back and forth.

I hadn't wanted to hurt her. Not any more. I only told her because she needed to know. She had to help fix the cracks.

I turned away and continued up the stairs. When Dad came home, my list was ready. That was the first thing we had to work on — we had to find Rickie. Then we'd have to take it from there. But we had to do it together.

*Bea VanderVelde teaches at Willowdale Christian School, Willowdale, Ont., and writes poetry and short stories.*

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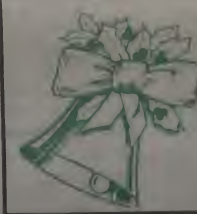
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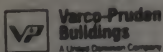
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# Fit for heaven

Jacoba Bos

The grey December afternoon had dissipated into darkness which slowly crept into the room where Emma Fields was sitting by the window, staring vacantly at the bare branches of the maple tree glistening with dampness. She shrugged her bony shoulders.

"Looks like Fred'll be late for supper again," she muttered as she stiffly got up from her rocking chair and walked towards her bed.

"Now where did my paring knife go?" she mumbled as she fingered the smooth bedspread.

Emma shuffled over the smooth linoleum to the dresser which was topped by a miniature gaudy-green ceramic Christmas tree with built in lights.

"Those forgetful kids," Emma sighed as she touched the ornament. "They left the lights on again. Now where's the switch?" She felt along the wall with her hands, then sank back into her rocker and dozed off, oblivious to the smells and sounds drifting towards her room.

"C'mon Emma, rise and shine, time to get y'all prettied up, cause you may get visitors, you know. But first we'd better get you your medicine. Here, open up, dear."

Emma obediently opened her mouth while her foggy mind tried to comprehend what was taking place.

"There, all done," the nurse said briskly as she efficiently arranged the medicine containers on the cart and walked out of the room, leaving the scent of roses lingering in the air. Emma stroked her thin white hair and smoothed her housecoat.

"Well, if we're gonna have company we'd better put the kettle on," Emma said to the empty chair beside the bed.

"Fred, will you put the kettle on?" she continued, while her gnarled fingers arranged imaginary cups and saucers. In a monotone voice she carried on a one-sided conversation with people who had once occupied an important place in her heart and mind.

"My goodness, aren't we happy today, Emma! I could hear you talking from the other side of the hall. That's the Christmas spirit, all right. Now

how about some fancy clothes to suit the occasion?" The nurse held up a brightly flowered dress, "Your daughter sent this up for you to wear. It sure is pretty."

Emma stroked the soft fabric. A glimmer of recognition spread across her face. "Sunday... church..." she said softly.

"Wow, a dress you wear only on Sunday for church?" The young nurse's eyes widened in amazement. "But you don't mind wearing it now, do you? After all, it is Christmas."

She unbuttoned the dress. "Okay Emma let's get this dress on you, we have work to do, you know."

Emma held her arms up while the dress slipped around her shapeless body. The long flowing skirt caressed her bony knees.

"There, now you look nice," the nurse said as she combed Emma's hair in soft waves. "Now for your slippers." She reached down and pulled the knitted slippers over Emma's swollen feet and looked up. "All dressed up and no place to go. Now remember, don't walk away again like you did the other day." The nurse raised a warning finger before stepping out of the room leaving Emma alone with her jumbled thoughts.

"Grandma, I finally found you. I looked all over the place...; this is such a big building."

The scent of pine filled the room as Lisa put a small evergreen in front of her grandmother, holding the tree steady with one hand and embracing the old woman with the other.

"Do you like it, Grandma?" Lisa's large brown eyes sparkled in her rosy face. "Mom asked me to take this to you cause she's too busy getting ready for Christmas."

Lisa unzipped her coat, letting it all fall to the floor. "Where do you want this, Grandma?"

Lisa held the fragrant tree at arm's length. "Mom even found some of your Christmas stuff in one of your boxes upstairs and Dad fixed the base of the tree so it won't fall over, see?" She held the tree upside down to show Emma the rough wooden cross which was nailed into the thin trunk.

"How be if we put it right here?" Lisa moved a dying plant aside and placed the small tree in the window sill. She then stepped back a few paces and surveyed the scene. "That looks quite straight, doesn't it, Grandma?" Remember one Christmas when the tree nearly fell over?" Lisa cheerfully continued her monologue while rummaging through her school bag to find the tree's accessories.

granddaughter. "Christmas..." she said slowly barely audibly. "Sing in church..."

"Yes, Grandma, we sing in church and we sing at home. Remember when you and I tried to dance to the tune of 'Silent Night' in stores. You said we may as well learn to dance to it. Remember how we danced around the kitchen and the cat went running for cover?"

Lisa held Emma's hands as she searched the old face for a

more bedtime story, she pleaded, "More singing, more dancing." She took a few steps toward Lisa. "Come Lisa, dance."

Tears welled up in Lisa's eyes, but she smiled through them. She again embraced her grandmother and led her through her room. Lisa sang softly about the angels and shepherds.

"What other songs do we know, Grandma? O this is a good one; 'Away in a manger, no crib for a bed...' Her young voice wavered as memories of a once strong and fun-loving grandmother overwhelmed her.

"You'll have to help me with this next stanza, Grandma," Lisa said as the twosome brushed past the Christmas tree causing the angel to tremble on its tree-top perch. "How does it go again?" Lisa tried to sound cheerful. "I should know it, I learned it when I was little."

She stopped in the middle of the room, holding her grandmother very close. "Oh, Grandma, you taught me that song, don't you remember it?"

Two big blue eyes looked intently at Lisa and a smile spread over the old woman's face. She opened her mouth as if to give wings to her words.

"Be near me Lord Jesus..." she said reverently. Then while Lisa guided her to her chair she continued, clearly reciting the words. "And fit us for, for..." she hesitated.

"For heaven," Lisa murmured.

"Yes, for heaven!" Emma's face lit up at the discovery of this glorious truth. "To dwell with thee there." Lisa finished the sentence for her. The angel nodded in agreement as a truck roared past the building.

Before Lisa left she sang the carol again, with Emma listening intently and joining in on the last verse. Lisa then tucked the warm afghan around her grandmother's frail body.

"Are you okay now, Grandma?"

Emma nodded, her lips forming the words, "And fit us for heaven."

"Well, now Emma, you sure look fit for heaven; you're still in your church dress," the nurse said as she found Emma in her rocking chair with her hands folded in prayer, peacefully facing the Christmas angel.

Jacoba Bos lives in Strathroy, Ont.



"Here's the angel; remember it, Grandma?" She placed the soft white figure in her grandmother's empty lap. Emma stroked it softly without taking her eyes off the tree which was becoming quite attractive at the hands of her artistic granddaughter.

"Now, for the crowning glory," Lisa said as she gently took the angel from Emma and placed it on the tree top.

"Lights please!" Lisa plugged in the electrical cord, then stood waiting for Emma's reaction to the colorful tree. It gently illuminated the room, softening the contours of the austere surroundings.

"Isn't it awesome, Grandma? Oh, I love Christmas, don't you?"

The old woman sighed. Tears filled her eyes as she looked from the tree to her

sign of recollection. "Let's try that again, Grandma," Lisa said as she helped Emma to her feet. Lisa embraced the old woman carefully, as if she were a china doll. "Here we go. One, two, three. 'Si-i-lent Night...' Careful now, Grandma. That's it."

Lisa gently manoeuvred Emma around the room, singing the familiar songs of Christmas in a clear voice.

Lisa felt Emma relax in her arms. The look on Grandma's face became less tense and a hint of a smile was evident as the teenaged girl and the old woman shuffled along on the smooth floor.

"Aren't you getting tired, Grandma?" Lisa asked as she led her Grandma to the rocking chair and then sat down herself.

Emma shook her head. "No, not tired," she said, and like a little girl asking for just one



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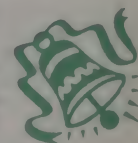
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May you have  
The gladness of Christmas  
which is HOPE,  
The spirit of Christmas  
which is PEACE,  
The heart of Christmas  
which is LOVE.





# 'They'll know we are Christians by our love'

## Lloyd Burghart

So what is unusual about receiving a Christmas card? Was it the message: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior..." Was it the \$100 bill (U.S.) that was enclosed? Was it the fact that the giver was a Muslim, the first mate on an Iranian ship?

What was going on here? What moved this man and the rest of the crew to show the staff of the Seafarers' Centre in Montreal this kindness?

An Iranian ship, complete with a picture of the Ayatollah Khomeini scowling at all who came on board, had come into port and at the request of the Coast Guard was conducting a lifeboat drill. During the drill, two seafarers were seriously injured and taken to hospital. Barend Biesheuvel, one of our chaplains, visited both men in their respective hospitals and reported that one, a Filipino, was in critical condition in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

Each night at the centre we received a progress report from either Barend or Gary Van

Leeuwen, the chaplain intern, or from the ship's first mate. One night, the first mate asked for us to pray specifically for the in-

Such a prayer request would not be at all unusual, for we pray each night with the seafarers for their safety in port



Left to right: Karin and Lloyd Burghart with volunteers Ieka and John Vanderkooi, Liz and George Sneider.

jured men, but particularly for the Filipino with the head injuries.

and on the seas — except for the fact that, as I've already remarked, the first mate was a

Muslim. Imagine a Muslim asking us Christians to pray for this seafarer from his ship.

So we prayed. The next night, the first mate came in excitedly telling us that a miracle had occurred! The injured man had regained consciousness, had been removed from the ICU unit, and sent to a regular room. And then, this Islamic officer said that a prayer offered by a believing person could be and had been effective!

After discussing with him what James has to say about prayer, the officer said, "It is the same teaching as in my religion." I don't know the Koran well enough to know if that's true, but I know that what we did is what the Bible tells us we should do.

Even as I write this, the injured seafarer is being flown home to the Philippines to recover with his family, as has the other injured man.

The Bible has a lot to say about doing good to others. "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who

belong to the family of believers" (Galatians 6:10). It's also the basic message of Christmas; God doing good for us, demonstrating his love for the unlovely. Doing good to others — demonstrating love — is the identifying characteristic by which the world will recognize Christians.

The opportunity to do good happens every day at the Seafarers' Centre in the Port of Montreal. But the opportunity occurs every day wherever we live or work. All we need to do is to be open and seize each opportunity.

Later that night, as we were going to the Metro stop, we met the first mate. We greeted him with, "You surprised us with your generous gift."

He responded with, "You surprised us with your love."

*Lloyd and Karin Burghart are host and hostess at the Seafarers' Centre, the Christian Reformed Church's ministry to seafarers in the Port of Montreal. The work is an outreach ministry of the churches of Eastern Canada and Quebec and is under the direction of the Rev. Mike Winnowski, harbor chaplain.*

## A special Christmas in the monastery

### John Rekker, Sr.

The crows liked to roost in the big oak trees next to the monastery. But there were times that they couldn't stand being there. It had to do with the monks and their nasty habit of... well, just read on.

All the monks who lived and worked in the monastery had one thing in common — they loved to sing. Especially winter evenings, after supper, they would gather around the fireplace in the main hall and sing well-known hymns and psalms of the church.

It wasn't that their singing was so beautiful. Frankly, their musical talents were limited. Most of them, if not all of them, had difficulty holding a tune. But they liked the experience because it gave them a chance to praise God.

Every Christmas Eve, they would gather to sing Christmas songs in praise of the little baby born in Bethlehem.

But every time they sang, the crows would wake up and flutter to some smaller trees in the field, a little farther from the monastery, until it was over. Was it that the crows were such

discerning — critics that they removed themselves quickly from the scene of slaughter?

~~~~~

It was late in December, just two days before Christmas. A strong wind swept over the snow-covered fields and through the leafless trees, causing the windows of the old monastery to rattle. The sky was dark grey. It was cold. The crows had found their roost in the oak trees and were puffing themselves up into black balls of protection.

Inside, supper was being prepared and all the monks were busy doing one thing or another. Suddenly there was a knock on the heavy main portal. The sound reverberated through the stone hallways.

Brother Andrew, who was in charge of the key for that week, wiped his hands, took off his apron and shuffled towards the main door. He opened the small viewing port beside the door to see who it was that had knocked.

He saw a young man standing outside, stamping his feet to keep warm. The young man ex-

plained that he was on a journey and requested lodging for one night. Brother Andrew opened the door and bowed as he let the young man in. "Come in," he said cheerfully. "Supper is ready."

After supper, all the brothers with their guest gathered around the fireplace in the main hall to sing. The young man joined in, too. Outside, the crows were stirring. One by one they left their favorite roost to exchange it for a less disturbing place downwind.

After two or three songs, brother Andrew nodded at Brother Peter and Brother Peter nodded at Brother Philip. They realized that this young man was an excellent singer.

Before the evening was over, all the brothers agreed to ask the young man to stay another day and to sing for them on Christmas Day. After some hesitation, the young man agreed.

~~~~~

The next evening everything was ready for the celebrations. The main door had been locked and the wood had been stacked

high next to the fireplace. The traditional Christmas log was in the fire.

Outside, the crows had settled down to roost for the night. The young man kept his promise and sang that evening. He sang many of the familiar Christmas tunes, even some new ones. His deep, clear voice rang out through the old building to the praise of the Savior who had come into this world long ago to rescue humankind from sin and hell.

The monks listened in rapt wonder. They nodded at each other, time and again. This was wonderful. This was a special Christmas. How much better this young man's singing was than their own! The Lord must be pleased, very pleased!

The crows were certainly pleased. This time they did not move to another place. The sound of the single voice was just not loud enough to bother them very much.

~~~~~

It was nearly midnight when Brother Andrew made the last round, checking doors and windows as he shuffled along. It

was quiet in the monastery. Everybody was asleep. When he had finished making the rounds, Brother Andrew entered his cell, changed into his nightgown, knelt for a brief prayer, swung himself under the blankets and tucked himself in for the night. With a deep sigh of satisfaction he lay down his head on the pillow.

He was almost asleep when he thought he heard something. Yes, he heard it again. There was a knock, a knock on the main portal. Who could that be at this time of night?

He put on his slippers, lit the lantern and shuffled down the halls to the main door. He opened the viewing port and looked. Suddenly he turned pale and his legs started to shake. It couldn't be! Yes, it was! There outside the door stood an angel.

All kinds of thoughts raced through Brother Andrew's mind. An angel? This young man? His beautiful singing? Was the Lord so pleased that he sent...?

Brother Andrew fumbled with the key... the wrong one... this one... upside down... no... yes, he had it right. Finally he

Continued on page 27...



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Why the IRA is holding out an olive branch

Has peace finally come to Ireland? (Part III)

Michael Fallon

Recent developments in Ireland have prompted author Michael Fallon to send an article to Christian Courier. Being of Catholic Irish descent but having an academic interest in Dutch Calvinist immigrants to Canada, Fallon wants to help our readers understand what the IRA is doing. In this third and final instalment, Fallon explains why Sinn Féin has renounced terrorism.

The question that is raised by the recent Sinn Féin announcement of a ceasefire is: What has occurred to bring about this peace offering?

The immediate reason for the ceasefire seems to be that the Sinn Féin has emerged as the dominant partner in the IRA-Sinn Féin allegiance. No longer is Sinn Féin seen as a mere subordinate mouthpiece.

In recent years Sinn Féin's electoral support has increased; it now represents one-third of the Roman Catholic voters in Northern Ireland. This increased support has also raised the stature of its leader, Gerry Adams. He is attracting the international spotlight.

As a result of these developments Sinn Féin is probably prominent enough now to direct the future of both the political and militant wings of the political organization. And as has been the case in similar situations, a political organization will customarily seek a political settlement.

Coupled with this is the continuing British resolve not to give in to the demands of terrorists. The IRA London bombing program was thus seen by many as a failure, as the British government which kept a "stiff upper lip" during the World War II blitz of London, appeared to be only hardening in its attitude towards the IRA.

A further reason for the IRA to reconsider its terrorist tactics: it has become increasingly difficult for the organization to garner financial support for its activities. Many within its traditional bastion of support, the Irish Catholic community, are tired of its strong-arm tactics, and now recognize it as a

scourge on those it has sworn to protect. As well, bungled bombings that have led to the deaths of innocent civilians rather than "hard targets" (British soldiers) have translated into declining financial support overseas, where the dream of a free, united Ireland has continued to be held by many Irish immigrants and their descendants.

Militant Protestants unrepentant

A final consideration when discussing this ceasefire is the success other terrorist organizations have met with in recent peace negotiations. After the Palestine Liberation Army and

An island of remarkable beauty, Ireland has been plagued by religious turmoil and savagery for generations.

the African National Congress laid down their arms to engage in negotiations, strong international pressure was brought to bear on Israel and South Africa to negotiate in good faith. The IRA may very well be hoping that similar forces would be generated to help them in their negotiations.

It is unfortunate for the Irish that there is no de Klerk type figure surfacing on the Protestant side. Despite Prime Minister Major's denials that no deal was made with the IRA, a number of Protestant leaders, particularly the Rev. Ian Paisley, the hard-line leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, are suspicious of the IRA's motives and have not used their influence to quell the actions of the Protestant terrorist organizations.

Responsible for more killings in the last two years than the IRA, the Ulster Defense Association and the Ulster Volunteer Force seem bent on derailing the peace talks by forcing the IRA into breaking the truce. It is likely however, that even their bloody reaction to the ceasefire was predicted in



Imposing structures top the Rock of Cashel. The cathedral (right), Saint Patrick's Cross (left) and the Round Tower (centre) dominate the hill

advance and calibrated to give the IRA the moral, upper hand at the bargaining table.

'Window of opportunity'

An island of remarkable beauty, Ireland has been plagued by religious turmoil and savagery for generations. If there is to be a lasting settlement, the Christians of Ireland need to stand up at this time and raise their voices for peace. A window of opportunity has opened, it has not opened for generations, and may not soon

open again.

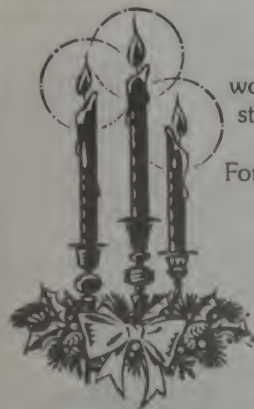
Protestants and Catholics need to set aside their differences and confront the hard-liners on each side who wish to maintain a violent status quo. This will not be an easy task in a land where history and religious tradition cry, "No surrender!" To succeed they must be guided by Jesus, who when asked, "Which is the greatest commandment?" replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, and love

your neighbor as yourself."

Much of Irish history had hinged on a narrow, sectarian understanding of the word "neighbor." Irish Christians need to reveal to their fellow citizens the true meaning of the word, and the hope and peace that abides in it.

Michael Fallon is a PhD candidate in history at the University of Guelph, Ont. His specialty is Dutch and Irish immigration history. He is now a member of the Christian Reformed Church.

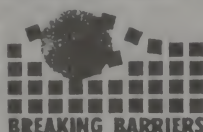
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A special Christmas in the monastery

Continued from page 23

opened the door slowly and then bowed three times.

"Hello," said the angel "I've been sent to ask why the brothers did not sing last evening."

Brother Andrew was dumbfounded. "But, but, had the Lord not heard the young man sing?"

"Yes, the Lord had heard him sing."

"But was the Lord not pleased with his beautiful singing?"

"Yes, the Lord liked his singing a lot. But he missed the singing by the brothers. He likes it the way they always sing from the heart. Could they still accommodate the Lord?" Without waiting for an answer, the angel turned around and left.

Brother Andrew shook his head. Imagine that, the Lord had missed their inferior singing! After staring into the night for a few moments, he quickly shut the door, ran towards the main hall and rang the bell. He stoked the fire that had been slumbering.

Soon all the monks came stumbling into the hall, wondering what was going on. Brother Andrew told them what had happened at the front door.

After a few minutes of stunned silence, it was brother Philip who started to sing in his thin, wavering voice: "Infant holy, infant lowly, for his bed a cattle stall..." Immediately the other brothers joined in. By the time they had switched to "Joy to the world, the Lord has come," their voices were raised in full cacophony, in praise to God.

Outside, the crows woke up with a start and flew from their roosts in a dark cloud of confusion. It took them a while before they had enough sense to find the smaller trees further down in the field.

But somewhere in heaven an angel recorded in the Book of Life that the Lord was very pleased.

John Rekker Sr. lives in Bowmanville, Ont. He wrote this story from memory. Bert Witvoet added a few touches here and there.

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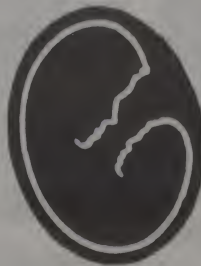
"Praise Him with strings and pipe! Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!" (Ps. 150)

Some of the songs on the album are: O Holy Night, O Thou Joyful Day, Tell Me the Old, Old Story, Crown Him with Many Crowns, Nu Sijt Wellicome, etc. (some Dutch content).

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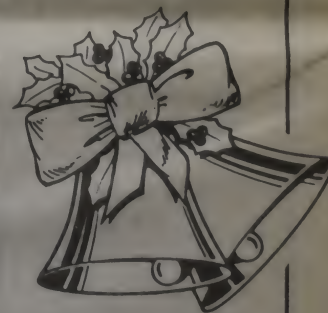
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"This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Gen 2:23)

The story of the creation of Eve never ceases to amaze me. It seems so unnecessary. Adam enjoyed a level of intimate communion with God which none of us can even begin to imagine. They walked together in the garden and spoke to one another as friends. How is it that Adam felt himself to be alone? Shouldn't a relationship with God, unencumbered by any of the baggage of sin or rebellion, meet all our needs for intimacy?

Apparently not. Adam needed to experience God's presence in a form which he could understand. Genesis tells us that "for the man there was not found a helper as his partner" (2:20). Elsewhere in the Old Testament, the word "helper" is generally used to refer to God's help. Clearly, Adam had God

himself as his helper. But he did not have a helper who was fit or "meet" for him, who could be a partner for him. He needed to receive God's help in human form. He needed God incarnate.

Paradise lost

The creation of Eve is prompted by that need. Adam and Eve are to be the image of God for one another, a channel of God's help — each to the other — through human hands and voice and presence. This is what marriage is designed to be.

We all know that's not the way it usually works. Instead of representing God to Adam, Eve chose instead to be for him the conduit of Satan's lies. Instead of representing God to Eve, Adam chose instead to acquiesce in those lies. The ability of human beings to be the image of God for one another in any meaningful sense was decisively undermined by the coming of sin into Eden.

But in the creation of Eve, we see pre-figured the coming of Christ, who is not only God's image but God himself. We still need to have God come to us in a form which we can understand. Since sin leaves us unable to fulfill this role for one another, God takes on human form himself and becomes "bone of our bones, flesh of our flesh" in the person of Jesus Christ. This is the mystery of the incarnation which we celebrate at Christmas, that God has stooped to become a help "meet" for us.

God's image in us restored

Tomorrow, I will be performing the wedding of a committed Christian couple. In the course of the service this couple will be making four different promises to each other. The first is based on this passage in Genesis. The bride and groom will each say to the other:

Here at last is bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh, divine help, in a form I understand. You are the image of God for me. God speaks to me in your voice. God looks at me through your eyes. God touches me with your hands. And, in my love for you, I too may reflect God.

Through the sanctifying power of Christ we can again find the ability to reflect God for one another as we were originally designed to do, not only in marriage, but in all of our life. Paul says that "all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor.3:18).

As we encounter God-made-



flesh in Jesus, the image of God within us is restored, so that others may look at us and say "Here at last is bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh, divine help in a form I understand."

Laura Smit is pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Clayton, N.J.

Peace on earth

Cathy Pater

A strange thing happened last Christmas Day.

Our church service concluded with a powerful hymn of praise, "Glory to God," an old Dutch song literally based on Luke 2:14. This verse follows the momentous proclamation of Christ's birth to the shepherd working the night shift in the quiet hills bordering Bethlehem.

I can't remember my mother-in-law singing "Ere zij God" without tear-filled eyes.

Recently translated, and included in the revised *Psalter Hymnal* of the Christian Reformed Church, the translation has given voice to various notes of discord.

Composed in 1870 by F.A. Schultz, "Ere zij God" has become the song of songs to end the year in the Netherlands. Dating back to the late '40s many Reformed Dutch immigrants have continued the sentimental tradition of singing this song with great emotion and nostalgia at the close of each year in their new

homeland.

Surrounded in a dimly lit church by glowing candles and the fragrant aroma of pine boughs crowned with velvet bows, the sentimental singing of the familiar Dutch words have a way of welling up a flood of memories and homesickness unique to an immigrant. I can't remember my mother-in-law singing "Ere zij God" without tear-filled eyes. The song praises God and desires peace on earth for his people in whom he delights. Translated, many of the older immigrants express a sense of loss and sadness in not being able to sing their beloved, "Ere zij God" (though the *Psalter Hymnal* also includes the Dutch text).

Some churches suggest that it is a personal preference: let the individual sing in whatever language is preferred. But this, I think, results in a Babel-symphony of unbalanced praise. Depending on where your loyalties lie and where you happen to sit, one language drowns out the other.

In the quiet interlude that followed the Christmas service, between the time the minister left the pulpit after we sang

"Glory to God" and before the organist began the postlude, a solitary, wavering voice was heard throughout the church. That solitary voice was singing "Ere zij God" in his beloved Dutch.

Everyone, anxious to get home for the Christmas festivities, stood still again. The church became very quiet except for the singing of that lone voice of a senior immigrant.

Somehow we knew! We knew he longed to fellowship with his God, with his fellow believers and immigrants in his native tongue. It was an awkward moment, but one by one others joined in, the musicians returned to their instruments and soon a mighty song of praise in the Dutch language was lifted up to God.

Later that Christmas Day, a news bulletin announced the execution of ousted President Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife after a secret military trial that found them guilty of genocide and "grave crimes" against the Romanian people.

"Peace on earth." Let's sing it in as many languages as possible!

Cathy Pater lives in Erin, Ont.



Wishing everyone a blessed Christmas and a Happy 1995

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Neighbors milk 200 goats; raises buck kids for the Christmas ethnic market

The word "kids" and "kidding" have taken on a whole new meaning for my neighbors Nathan and Mary Harris and their three children. The Har-

health foods, and goat's milk and feta cheese suit their taste buds.

Now, after almost a year of milking goats, Mary Harris says

depending on the amount of milk they have.

The Harrises have 250 does (milking goats), 150 kids (young goats), 90 doelings over



Just kidding around! Two week old buck kids.

risers went from milking 35 Holstein cows to milking 150 to 200 goats. They are two of the many Ontario dairy farmers who have made the switch to goat farming.

A few years ago people would have laughed at the thought of milking goats. Not any more. There is an increasing demand for goat milk, feta cheese and yogurt. A growing number of people are seeking

she has no regrets. Uncertainty in the dairy industry related to the GATT talks was one of the reasons she and Nathan switched to goats. High milk quota prices which might come down was the other factor. They don't need a quota for their goats and they deal directly with the processor. The Harrises grade their milk and truck it to a goat processing plant 200 km away once or twice a week.

the age of five months and two breeding bucks.

'Picky eaters' produce good milk

They have six different breeds. The Oberhasli, Saanen and Toggenburg are Swiss breeds. The French Alpine originated in the French Alps. The Nubian, which has long ears that hang down to their necks, is an African breed.

Saanen goats, which are mostly white, are the top milk producers. Good (commercial) milking produces two to two-and-a-half litres of milk a day. Some goats only produce one or two litres a day. (Maybe B.C. goats give more than Ontario goats?)

Goat's milk is not what I had expected — it's not yellow and fatty. It looks a little watery and is quite sweet. The Harris' goats' butterfat test has been around 3.85 per cent. That's low; their Holsteins tested around 4.5 per cent butterfat.

Contrary to popular belief, goats do not survive on poor quality feed or garbage. "Goats are very picky eaters," says Mary as she sweeps out the feed mangers in the milking parlor. "The goats will eat all the grain corn in the parlor mangers but will leave small pieces of cob."

Buck kids are sold for meat at no heavier than 35 pounds to the Montreal market for \$2 to \$2.50 a pound. The Easter and Christmas ethnic markets are the best of the year. The Harrises will ship about 100 buck kids in early December whose meat will end up on many Christmas plates in Montreal and in the U.S.

Room for growth and better production

Anita O'Brien, sheep and goat specialist with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food

Agricultural

Housekeeping

Maynard VanderGallen



and Rural Affairs, says 65 to 70 dairy producers have switched to goat milk production in Ontario. Quebec has always had a fairly strong goat industry. There is only one goat milk processor in Nova Scotia.

O'Brien says there is lots of room for the goat industry to grow. "It's a small part of our agricultural industry," she says. "Canada imports goat cheese from countries like Greece and France."

O'Brien would like to see the commercial goat herd improve its milk production. An average doe gives 650 litres per year, while purebred herds give twice that amount. "If commercial herds could get milk production up to 750 litres per year it would help [their owners] financially," she says.

Maynard VanderGallen lives near Renfrew, Ont., and writes agriculture columns and articles.






Mary and Nathan Harris in their goat milking parlor, attaching two infusion milking units to their milking does.





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If you wish a photo included, send us the original.</p> <p>d) <i>Christian Courier</i> will not be responsible for any errors due to handwritten or phoned-in advertisements.</p> <p>e) The rate shown above for classifieds covers any length up to six column inches. <i>Christian Courier</i> reserves the right to charge for additional column inches at the rate of \$13.50 per column inch (GST incl.).</p> <p>NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS</p> <p>We offer a one-year subscription for only \$20.00 (GST incl.) to the couples whose wedding is announced in the <i>Christian Courier</i> and to the parents of the child whose birth announcement appears in our paper. To facilitate matters, we encourage those who request the wedding or birth announcement to enclose \$20.00 and the couple's correct address.</p> <p>Christian Courier 4-261 Martindale Rd. St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1 Phone (905) 682-8311 Fax (905) 682-8313</p>	 <p>GROOT NIBBELINK (VERSTEEG): We, Bill and Tena, thank our heavenly Father for entrusting to our care a precious, healthy daughter CHRISTINA ROSE born Oct. 27, 1994. A sister for Sarah and Nathan. A granddaughter for Robert and Otina Versteeg of Gorrie, Ont., and Bernard and Grada Groot Nibbelink of Bloomfield, Ont. Great-granddaughter for Aaltje van Donkersgoed of Gorrie, Ont. Home address: R.R. #3, Komoka, ON N0L 1R0</p> <p>VANDER HEIDE: "Worship the Lord with gladness, come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his" (Ps. 100:2-3a). With joy and thankfulness to the Lord, Bob and Lorraine Vander Heide announce the birth of their second child. JACOB ROBERT was born on Nov. 9, 1994, at Welland County General Hospital, weighing 8 lb., 10 oz., a little brother for William. Eighth grandchild for Bep Vander Maas of Brampton, Ont. (and Jack Vander Maas, in heaven). Twentieth grandchild for Bill and Willy Vander Heide of Wellandport, Ont.</p>	<p>Brockville St. Catharines 1954 December 9 1994 It is with great joy and thankfulness to God that we celebrate the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents.</p> <p>JOHN and GERRY MULDER (nee WILDEMAN) We thank the Lord for all the care and blessings He has provided and we thank you, Mom and Dad, for all the love and support you have given us over the years. Congratulations from your children and grandchildren and may God continue to bless you.</p> <p>Harry & Jane Mulder — Nepean Devin, Sheena, Branna Henry & Sharon Mulder — Bolton Stephanie, Joel Judy & Enc Kuipers — St. Catharines Johnathan, Jessica Home address: 202-55 Main Street, St. Catharines, ON L2N 4T8</p>	<p>Maranatha Chr. Ref. Church Bowmanville, Ont.</p> <p>"Yet I am always with You; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And being with you, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" (Ps. 74:23-26). While at home on Monday, Oct. 24, 1994.</p> <p>ANDY HEIDINGA at the age of 58, was quietly taken into glory to be with his God and King. Beloved husband of Grace Heidinga, father of Florene Heidinga. He is lovingly remembered by the Bowmanville Maranatha Chr. Ref. Church congregation as custodian, elder and father figure to most of its members, especially the Cadets and the church's youth.</p> <p>"...those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint" (Isaiah 40:31).</p> <p>FRANCINE BANDSTRA was called to her long awaited home with Jesus at the age of 35. Beloved daughter of Jim and Betty Bandstra, sister/sister-in-law of Sue and John Bishop, Mark and Sylvia Bandstra, and dear friend to the members of the Friendship Club. Francine was treasured in the hearts of the Bowmanville Maranatha Chr. Ref. Church congregation for her ready smile, childlike faith and love for Christ. Her favorite song "I am the Church" has been profoundly marked by her memory.</p>	<p>The Board and Staff of Calvin Chr. School, Hamilton, Ont., wish to express their Christian sympathy to the family of</p> <p>MR. JAN VANDERVELDE at the occasion of his passing on to glory. We remember Mr. Vandervelde fondly and remain grateful for his dedicated work as the first Principal of CCS in 1952. May his family and friends find comfort in the same Lord whom Jan served with his life. Ron van der Haiden, Chairman. A. Ben Harsevoort, Principal.</p>
		<p>Personal</p> <p>Looking for a lasting gift? We'll produce your family memoirs. We interview, write, edit, add old photos, and produce a book. Reasonable rates, references, confidential. Call (905) 988-6174 or write FMP, 44 South Dr., St. Catharines, ON L2R 4V2</p>		<p>Accommodation</p> <p>For rent: Basement apartment, one bedroom, close to church and shopping area. Ideal for students. \$400 a month. Call (905) 641-0829</p>
		<p>For Sale</p> <p>For sale: Church Pipe Organ. 21 ranks in good condition. Please call (519) 752-3445</p>		<p>Real Estate</p> <p>GREENHOUSE OPERATION AND HOME FOR LEASE Well maintained 23,000 sq. ft. greenhouses and 4-bedroom bungalow in prime location in St. Catharines, Ont., two minutes from the QEW. Available January 1995. For more info please call (905) 984-3060</p>
		<p>Marriages</p>  <p>WONDER/HORDIJK: With joy and thanksgiving we would like to announce the wedding of our daughter JENNIFER WONDER to BASTIAAN HORDIJK on Dec. 10, 1994. May God be your guide, support and bless you for years to come. The wedding will take place on Saturday, Dec. 10, 1994, at 2:30 p.m., in the Hebron Chr. Ref. Church, Whitby, Ont. Their new address will be: 32 Runcom St., St. Catharines, ON L2M 1N8</p>		<p>Personal</p> <p>ONE TO ANOTHER Christian companion magazine. Hundreds of readers Canada-wide. Single issue \$5. Write to: #302, 1502-2nd Ave. S. Lethbridge, AB T1J 4A2</p>
				<p>How to Write Your Memoirs (or how to talk your parents into writing theirs). Booklet with interviewing, writing, and publishing information. Forms and resources list. Send \$7.95 to FMP, 44 South Dr., St. Catharines, ON L2R 4V2</p>
<p>ATTENTION!</p> <p>When you fax your display or classified ads to us (particularly obituaries), please type them and check spelling BEFORE you transmit the text. Thank you.</p> <p>ATTENTION!</p>				

Classifieds

Christmas Greetings	Job Opportunities	For Sale	Job Opportunities	Job Opportunities
 <p>VAN MARRUM: I wish my family, friends and relatives a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Mr. Gerlof Van Marrum, 143 Rock Street, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0</p>	<p>Trenton Christian School</p> <p>invites applications for the position of</p> <p>PRINCIPAL</p> <p>to assume responsibilities for the 1995/96 school year. Please direct inquiries and application to:</p> <p>Search Committee Trenton Christian School 20 Fourth Avenue Trenton, ON K8V 5N3 Phone (613) 392-3600</p>		<p>Interim Pastor</p> <p>Bethel Chr. Ref. Church, Acton, Ont., is seeking the services of a retired Pastor (part-time) to help church council with pastoral work and preach two Sundays a month.</p> <p>Please send letters of interest to: Mr. Harry Kerkhof, Clerk, 43 Storey Drive Acton, ON L7J 2N4</p>	
<p>Church news</p>				
<p>Christian Reformed Church</p> <p>Calls accepted —to Riverside, Welland-port, Ont., Cand. Donald Cowart of California</p> <p>Address change —Rev. Gerard and Mrs. Margaret Bouma, 2385 Portman Dr., Grand Rapids, MI 49508.</p>				
<p>ADDRESS CHANGE</p> <p>Please use this form and allow four weeks for processing request</p> <p>Attach your present label here.</p> <p>Please indicate when new address takes effect</p>	<p><i>O come, thou Dayspring, come, and cheer our spirits by thine advent here; disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight.</i> Latin, 12th c.</p> 		<p>ADMINISTRATOR</p> <p>Langley Christian School is in need of an administrator for its new Middle School/High School campus. This new facility will house approximately 180 students from Grades 6-9 in September 1995 and incorporate an additional grade level in each subsequent year so that it will become a 6-12 campus of approximately 400 students in four years time.</p> <p>LCS is looking for an educational leader who is a committed Christian and who has the experience, vision and the skills necessary to lead this school during these exciting years of development and growth.</p> <p>Position commences August 1, 1995, or earlier.</p> <p>Inquiries/applications to: Leo Smit, Principal c/o 21789-50th Avenue, Langley, BC V3A 3T2 Telephone (604) 533-2222 Fax (604) 533-7276</p>	
	<p>Applications accepted for maternity leave position</p> <p>The Abbotsford Christian School Board is accepting applications for a maternity leave position at Clayburn Hills Campus. This is a Grade 1 position from approximately March to June 1995.</p> <p>Applicants must hold a valid B.C. Teacher's Certificate and meet the requirements of the ACS Employment of Teacher's Policy. Please send resume, Statement of Faith and credentials to:</p> <p>Ed Noot, Principal Abbotsford Chr. School, Clayburn Hills Campus 3939 Old Clayburn Road, Abbotsford, BC V2S 6B7 Phone: (604) 850-2694 Fax: (604) 850-7075</p>			
	<p>THE MUSIC GROUP</p> <p>offers for sale some previously-owned organs</p> <p>1 CONTENT K 500 church organ, full console (2 x 61 keys plus full pedalboard, 33 stops) with external speaker systems, built in 1991, suitable for church</p> <p>1 VISCOUNT full console organ, (2 x 61 keys plus full pedal, 46 stops) for practice use at home</p> <p>1 LOWREY 4-pinet organ with 13 pedals and built in leshe (2 x 44 keys) for use at home.</p> <p>At Christmas Prices!</p> <p>Please phone: The Music Group at (905) 455-0797 or visit us on Saturday between 9:30 - 4:00 p.m. 190 Hwy. 7 West, Unit 5, Brampton, Ont.</p>		<p>Financial Development Officer</p> <p>required by Citizens for Public Justice</p> <p>The Financial Development Officer is responsible for raising financial support from individuals, businesses, foundations, churches, etc. for CPJ's programs.</p> <p>Suitable candidates will be able to articulate CPJ's public justice perspective, have experience in financial development or marketing, and show evidence of being a self-starter.</p> <p>Location: Toronto Salary range: \$25,000 - \$35,000 Start date: January 1, 1995 (Position will be filled only when a suitable candidate is found)</p> <p>Direct written inquiries to: Harry J. Kits, Executive Director Citizens for Public Justice #311, 229 College Street, Toronto, ON M5T 1R4 Fax: (416) 978-2458</p>	

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Classifieds

Miscellaneous

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An examination of the creation/evolution debate, focusing on how Christian and evolutionary views lead to different understandings of human behavior. paper, 318 pgs, \$12.95



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Communication Arts and Sciences	Philosophy
Developmental Mathematics	Physics
Economics/Business	Political Science
Education	Psychology
English	Religion
Geology, Geography and	Science Education
Environmental Studies	Spanish

Calvin College seeks faculty members who affirm the Christian faith as expressed by the Reformed creeds and have academic and personal qualifications for teaching and scholarship. Applications from North American minorities in any discipline are strongly encouraged. Interested persons or persons who wish to make nominations should correspond with the chairperson of the respective department at:

Calvin College
3201 Burton Street SE
Grand Rapids MI 49546 USA

Calvin College is an equal opportunity employer.



*Oh, cleansed be every breast from sin;
make straight the way for God within;
prepare we in our hearts a home,
where such a mighty guest may come.*
Charles Coffin, 1676-1749

Calvin College



The Education Department of Calvin College seeks candidates for a tenure-track faculty position in at least **psychology of education, introduction to teaching, and elementary supervision**. Responsibilities include teaching courses in these areas, advising students, supervising elementary student teachers, and providing leadership to surrounding school districts.

Qualifications include: 1) an earned doctorate (or ABD) in psychology of education or a closely related field; 2) K-12 classroom teaching experience (secondary experience is preferred); and 3) a scholarship agenda. Women and minority candidates are encouraged to apply.

Calvin is a Christian college within the Reformed tradition and is an equal employment opportunity employer. Interested applicants should forward a letter stating qualifications and vita to Gloria Goris Stronks, Staff Development Committee, Education Department, Calvin College, 3201 Burton, S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49546.



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Classifieds/Events

Events	Events	Events	Events	Miscellaneous
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1926 70th Anniversary 1996

First Chr. Ref. Church, Vancouver, B.C., hopes to celebrate its 70th anniversary, D.V., in 1996. Needed: anecdotes and pictures (on loan) of people and occasions connected with this congregation. Please send as soon as possible to:

Mrs. V. Pel, 4278 Watling St., Burnaby, BC V5J 1V2
Phone: (604) 433-5549

Nederlandse Kerstzangdienst

Emmanuel Reformed Church
170 Clarke Street North
Woodstock, Ontario
Tel. (519) 537-6422

Nederlandse Kerstzangdienst
met medewerking van het Kerkkoor

Wij hopen, D.V., twee diensten te houden:
zondag, 4 december, 1994, 7.30 n.m.
zondag, 11 december, 1994, 7.30 n.m.
Verversingen na de dienst.

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Congratulations!

The Council and Congregation of Westmount Christian Reformed Church, Strathroy, Ont., extend their heartfelt congratulations to Pastor Anthonie and Mrs. Ann VandenEnde on the occasion of their 40th wedding anniversary and service in the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church.

God be praised!
Jerry Kingma, Clerk.

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Calendar of Events

Dec. 3 Guild arts and crafts sale, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., at The King's University College, Edmonton, Alta.

Dec. 3 Christmas concert featuring the "Mattaniah Male Choir" (dir. Herman Den Hollander) and organist Andre Knevel, 8 p.m., Mountainview CRC, Grimsby, Ont. Admission \$5 (\$3 for students).

Dec. 4 "Nederlandse Kerstzangdienst," 7:30 p.m., Emmanuel Ref. Church, 170 Clarke St., Woodstock, Ont. Info.: (519) 537-6422. Repeated on Dec. 11!

Dec. 4 Concerts by the St. Thomas District Male Choir "Crescendo," at 3 p.m., CRC, Essex, Ont. At 6:30 p.m., First CRC, Chatham, Ont.

Dec. 7 Christmas choir concert, with orchestra, 8 p.m., Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ont. Conductor: Christiaan Teeuwen. For tickets call (905) 648-2131.

Dec. 10 Concert by the "Listowel Concert Singers," including the "Magnificat" and various choruses from Handel's "Messiah," with audience participation. At 8 p.m., Trinity United Church, Listowel, Ont. Info.: (519) 291-4356 or 291-3280.

Dec. 10 Christmas concert by the Strathroy Mixed Choir "Rejoice in the Lord" and the St. Thomas District Male Choir "Crescendo," 7:30 p.m., Westmount CRC, Strathroy, Ont.

Dec. 10 Christmas concert featuring the "Mattaniah Male Choir" (dir. by Herman Den Hollander) and organist Andre Knevel, 8 p.m., Centennial United Church, London, Ont.

Dec. 10 Christmas concert by the "Con Spirito Choir," 8 p.m., First CRC, Sarnia, Ont. Info.: (519) 383-0438.

Dec. 11 J.S. Bach's "Christmas Oratorio" will be performed by the Mississauga Choral Society and Sinfony Players and

EXPERIENCED PRINCIPAL

required for Willowdale Christian School, a Christian elementary school (Grades JK-8, 175 member student body), located in North York, Ont., Canada. Position commences August 1, 1995. Have a rewarding and challenging experience assisting a Christian school continue to provide Christ-centred quality education. Letters of inquiry may be sent or faxed in confidence c/o Larry Dekkema, 100 Allstate Parkway, Suite #501, Markham, ON L3R 6H3, fax number (905) 940-8014. For further information contact Larry Dekkema at (905) 940-8013.

special guests Sherri Karam (soprano), Marcia Swanson (mezzo soprano), Dennis Giesbrecht (tenor), and Bruce Schaefer (baritone). At 3 p.m., St. Dominic's Church, Mississauga, Ont. Info.: (905) 278-7059.

Dec. 11 Annual candlelight service with the "Adoramus-Maranatha Choir," 7:30 p.m., Maranatha CRC, York, Ont.

Dec. 14-21 Christmas concerts by the Ontario Chr. Music Assembly, directed by Leendert Kooij, with Andre Knevel at the organ. Dec. 14: 8 p.m., Trinity United Church, Bowmanville, Ont.; Dec. 17: 8 p.m., Willowdale United Church, Willowdale, Ont.; Dec. 21: 8 p.m., Melrose United Church, Hamilton, Ont. Info. & tickets: (416) 636-9779.

Dec. 17 Christmas concert by the St. Thomas Ladies Choir and the St. Thomas District Male Choir "Crescendo," 7:30 p.m., Knox Presb. Church, St. Thomas, Ont.

Dec. 19 Christmas concert featuring the "Mattaniah Male Choir" (dir. by Herman Den Hollander) and organist Andre Knevel, 8 p.m., Chalmers United Church, Woodstock, Ont.

Dec. 23 Annual candlelight service with the "Adoramus-Maranatha Choir," 8 p.m., Mount Hamilton CRC, Hamilton, Ont.

Dec. 24 Carol sing and organ solos with Andre Knevel at the organ, Free Reformed Church, Clearbrook, B.C.; Dec. 25, Dutch service in same church with organist Andre Knevel, recorded for Dutch Radio E.O.

Jan. 5 Special advent service with the "Adoramus-Maranatha Choir," 7 p.m., Fruitland CRC, Stoney Creek, Ont.

The Commonwealth Games and the United Church

In the United Church of Canada there is a fellowship of people who strive "to uphold the historic Christian faith" within that denomination. The members are deeply troubled about the direction the United Church of Canada is taking and express their concerns in their own paper, Fellowship Magazine.

In the Sept./Oct. issue editor Lori Gwynne compared the recently held General Council meetings with the Commonwealth Games and concluded: "It reminded me of how the United Church reflects the growing sense of world-oneness encouraged by such international sports events as the Commonwealth Games. She continued:

"What the United Church seems to be attempting to birth is a new religion, without Jesus as Lord, without Christ as King, without Scripture as authority. It's a 'one-size fits all' faith that desperately seeks to be relevant at the cost of clear convictions. It's a church that opens its arms to the spiritually hungry, then suggests they can only look within themselves to find bread.

"With all the horizontal emphasis on 'kin-dom' it seems the King has been de-throned.

"Participating in the closing worship, I was pained to hear words changed in our great hymns, such as, 'Praise my soul the God (not King) of heaven,'

and 'Lead on, O Cloud of Presence' instead of 'Lead on, O King Eternal.' That Cloud, as we know, led eventually to Mount Sinai. You try standing with Moses as the mountain shook with the deafening command, 'I, the Lord your God am a jealous God.... You shall have no other gods before me.' Not the god of popularity, inclusivity, not even ecology. Give me the 'King' any day, who always 'leads us in triumphal procession in Christ' (2 Cor. 2:14)."

Reasons for Canadian unity

In the Mennonite Brethren Herald of September 30, Dr. John Redekop gave his views on the Separatist victory in Quebec. In his opinion, Canadian unity must be rooted not in divine will, but in human reason. As a committed federalist he is deeply convinced that Canada should remain one, and he cites the following reasons for that viewpoint:

"First, in recent years, many parts of the world have been plunged into animosity and violence, even civil war and large-scale loss of life, by ethnic and linguistic assertiveness. That's tragic. Canada can model a better way. With our tradition of gradualism and evolution, this peaceable kingdom can demonstrate how a society composed of two main language groups and many cultures can thrive in a climate of toleration and mutual collective affirmation. If Canadians cannot resolve their differences without destroying their country, then what hope is there for the bulk of all other countries which have far more serious internal problems?

"Second, I consider it possible, perhaps probable, that the separation of Quebec would not be entirely peaceful. Serious

problems might result if various aboriginal bands in Quebec would, as their leaders have said, try to secede from an independent Quebec and remain Canadian. Flashpoints, as at Oka in 1990, could develop quickly.

"Third, while a separate Quebec would be a viable political entity, likely with a lowered standard of living, it might well be that the rest of Canada could not survive. Would a country with half its population and wealth in Ontario be viable? Would the five relatively prosperous Western provinces continue to support the four relatively poor Eastern provinces on the other side of a foreign country?

"Fourth, I believe that all parts of Canada, including Quebec, would pay a heavy economic price if Quebec were

to separate. Of course, no one can make firm predictions.

"So how should Christians respond to the election of a Quebec government committed to separation?

"We must constantly remind ourselves, even as some of us promote national unity and others do not, that political and national loyalties are always secondary for Christians. Our primary identity derives from membership in Christ's body and that body has 'members' in Quebec and around the world. We must also practise and promote toleration and affirmation and reject animosity and antagonism. And we must pray that peace will prevail."

Church press

Jacob Kuntz

The common good

Canada's social programs are under review by our present government. Our national debt and our annual deficits force the Chrétien government to take a hard look at all the social benefits to which Canadians have grown accustomed. But a newspaper like Catholic New Times is worried. Worried that in the process "the common good" will be overlooked and forgotten and that there will be many victims along the way. A front page article in the issue of November 6 concludes with the following remarks:

"So we'd better be careful what we do with Canada's social programs. Yes, we must deal with the deficit, but in ways that tend to heal rather than to worsen the rich-poor polarization within our society. Yes, we must pay down the debts, but without cutting the moral content out of the role of government.

"Governments have a unique and crucial responsibility in human society: the responsibility of directing the economy so that it serves the common good of society. Under today's conditions, that respon-

sibility is very difficult to fulfil, since 'the market' thinks that it should be more and more free of 'government interference.' But human society is more important than the market. Mutual responsibility is more important than competitiveness. Solidarity is more fundamental, and more binding, than individual freedom to go after the highest margin of profit.

"Between now and Christmas, Canadians have a

quotes



chance to encourage each other towards a national commitment to the common good. We will be doing so in the teeth of a spreading despair that doubts the ability of public instruments to serve the common good effectively.

"This is a moment when lay-Christians must find new ways to translate Gospel insights into turn-of-the-twenty-first-century civic categories.

"Let us not be too timid or too jaded to join this historic conversation. Forcefully, courteously, and hopefully."

When may we go to war?

Remembrance Day 1994 led the editor of the Anglican Journal (Nov. 1994) to the question: Is it enough to remember? Or has the time come to do more to ensure future generations will not have to make such sacrifices as those made in the past? The answer given was that Canadian lives may not be sacrificed for anything less than a just cause. But when is the cause for war just?

"What Canada needs, and what every country and the United Nations could use, is a set of principles to gauge when it is right to use force.

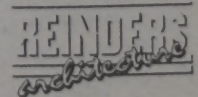
"Anglican primate Archbishop Michael Peers has offered a place to start. When the Gulf War began, he measured it against the six criteria traditionally used by the church to determine whether war is morally justifiable.

"Using these criteria, war is justified if it is the last resort after all other attempts to resolve the conflict; if there is a right authority in the initiation of hostility; if there is a right cause in the purpose of war; if there is proportionality in the use of force; if there is discrimination in the application of force; and if there is a reasonable prospect of success.

"Archbishop Peers, applying these tests to the Gulf War, determined that the war was not just, and events since have

borne him out. Using these criteria with regard to Haiti shows President Clinton was wrong there. The time has come for Canada to adopt such criteria so that Canadians can be assured they will never fight and die for anything but a just cause. In a post-Cold War world, the decision to go to war should be hard to justify."

Jacob Kuntz is a retired Christian Reformed pastor who serves part-time as a chaplain in Holland Christian Homes, Brampton, Ont.



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Soldiers killed 6,2000 at this church at Kibuye in, Rwanda

When millions of refugees ran from the butchery in Rwanda this year, Christians responded with prayer and compassion. The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee worked with partners in the Canadian Foodgrains Bank to ship thousands of tonnes of food. Today, Lou Haveman and Patsy Orkar are in Rwanda, using some of that food to help a fellow Christian rebuild a shattered community. The new governor, Kablea Asiel, is a Christian who is determined to bring peace and reconciliation. But he has nothing, no desk, no car, no money to pay teachers or road crews. Nothing to pay teachers and other workers in essential services.

The Pentecostal Church suggested that food could be used to pay the teachers and workers. Lou Haveman and Patsy Orkar have lined up 2,000 metric tonnes to help, 300 tonnes of it from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. Here's an example of how food can be more than relief, more than a handout. It's building a bridge from a disastrous past into a better future. It's Christians like you helping Christians like Asiel.

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